
APPROACH: Mostly geared toward workshop, group work, and individual conferences; some traditional class time devoted to discussion, presentations. Once we have found our direction and stride, we may decide to use some class sessions for independent or group work and one-on-one conferences.

CONTENT: This is a course in the writing and editing of a substantial work of literary nonfiction that, if it meets editorial standards, will appear in the department’s 2007 issue of *Blue Ice Anthology*, a general interest journal written by this class, then printed and distributed to the department and university community later in the year. As General Editor, I will make the final decision about whether or not your work will be included in the anthology. As members of the editorial board of *Blue Ice*, your collective goal is to produce, by the end of this quarter, a professionally polished copy of your own essay as well as to assist the rest of your classmates in achieving that same goal.

The target length for your finished essay should be about fifteen to twenty typed, double-spaced pages. *The Fourth Genre* is our main text for the class. It contains an anthology of essays as well as theoretical and craft-oriented articles. I will make periodic assignments from it for purposes of class discussion. Otherwise, you should read widely in it to discover what you can about stylistic and formal strategies in the literary nonfiction genre.

Once we have established your writing groups, I will ask each group to choose one essay from Part 1 of *The Fourth Genre* and study it closely for the ways in which it establishes its form, its voice, its style, its ethos. After you have had a chance to collectively examine your selection closely, I will schedule group presentations (roughly 30 minutes long) in which you will provide for the rest of us a close stylistic reading of the text you have chosen. Ideally, you will choose an essay because it teaches you something about good writing in this genre and because you feel what the author does with prose style is something you might like to approximate in your own writing. These presentations will be scheduled somewhere around the 6th week.

Otherwise, your major work is to plan and draft and redraft until you have a piece of writing you are ready to workshop in a variety of contexts—with your group,
with the rest of the class, and with me in conference. Progressively over the first 10-11 weeks you should push hard on your essay until it has arrived at the "final" editing/proofreading stage. Once again, we will work on this final stage in a variety of contexts. At term's end, each of you will submit, in publication-ready form, two versions of your essay, one print and one electronic. Although I don't require it, I suggest you keep a process journal during the drafting and editing stages to help you think through the formal strategies of your essay. This kind of writing that many writers engage in "to get it right with the self" (James Britton's phrase) can be a very useful tool. You may also want to save copies of all major drafts of your essay in case you need to loop back to something you had tried earlier but initially rejected.

All of you should have access to the CCLJ. Typically, much of your drafting and revising will be done there, and final copy must be placed on Mac disks at term's end to be turned over to the production editor for the production phase of BIA. I am still working out the details of the production phase and will keep you posted.

GRADE: As you might expect, your final grade depends almost entirely upon the quality of both your process and product. By "process," I mean you attend class, meet deadlines, work effectively with your group, conference with me, respond in constructive ways to suggestions for revision, etc. The bottom line is that I simply assume you are highly motivated to write well and that grades will not be an issue.

A FEW KEY PROVISIONAL DEADLINES:

Tuesday of Week 2—Tentative Prospectus for your essay due (1 page/single-spaced; copies for all class members)

Tuesday of Week 4—group decision about writer/essay you will study

Week 5-6—working draft of essay due; conferences

Weeks 6-7—group presentations

Week 7—Good, full draft of essay due

Week 8—Conferences

Week 9-11—Workshopping & conferences

Week 12-14—Editing; Prayer, burning of incense, other offerings to the Writing Gods

Monday of Exam Week—Final Versions of Essay Due

FINAL COMMENTS: We will have several primary goals this quarter. Our main business will be to produce copy for Blue Ice Anthology. We have 14 weeks to do that: ambitious but possible, and possible at a high level of quality, as the previous issues of Blue Ice, I think, illustrate. Our broader, long-term goal is to become overtly sensitive to the sound and look of language used by established writers of
literary nonfiction. Your eyes and ears must become nigh tuned to the nuances or words and sentences, their "mouthfeel," their rhythms. In attempting to grasp conventions of usage that at times baffle the most acute critics of standard written English you will, almost as by-product, become aware of the disputes between linguistic liberals and conservatives over language issues, some of which are substantive, some of which deal with relatively trivial distinctions. You may prefer, finally, the liberal perspective, or you may take sides with conservatives like John Simon. As Joe Williams says somewhere, we all, as writers, have our "black beasts," those quirky usages and stylistic tics that drive us crazy. Whatever the case, at the end of 14 weeks I want all of us to have a much more discriminating eye and ear for the way good literary prose looks on the page and resonates in the mind—and how/why it works the way it does for intelligent and receptive readers.

Because this is a graduate class and because time is relatively short, both near-perfect attendance and a responsible attitude toward deadlines are essential. You must provide your group with quality drafts, not vague sketches or outlines, and you must do so in a timely manner. The essay you write must be approached carefully, diligently, and patiently. Vision and Re-vision, crafting until you get it right: the blessings and burdens of serious writers. Because the goal of all our efforts is publication in BIA, we must all commit ourselves to the highest possible standards. I will be in my office, or at least around the department, quite a bit this term, though I will be trying to find my own writing space. Come by to chat whenever you need it or feel like it. I don’t mind being called at home (482-8046) if you have some pressing business (not after 9 p.m., please), but I hope to write afternoons M-W-F and would appreciate not being disturbed then.

If Blue Ice Anthology is to succeed, we need to cooperate and collaborate with one another. Let me know what is on your mind. I’ll do the same.

NOTE: MTU's Affirmative Action Officer has asked that all faculty include the following statement on each course syllabus:

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, (2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).