

# Writing Nonfiction

## “Everyday I have a list called ‘Everyday’”

English 211w

Instructor: Marguerite Daisy Atterbury

email: matterbury@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Office: Klapper 332 | Office Hours: Th 3-4:00pm

Spring 2019 Course 6841

T/h 1:40-2:55pm Kiely 416

(email for appointment)

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*I'm okay with subjectivity. It's silky wovens that mess me up. I put everything back in its place, thinking I ought to be sewing less and Writing more. Everyday I have a list called "Everyday."*

—Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women*

Readings: Please arrive having read these texts for class.

Media: Will be distributed or shown in class - no advanced preparation required.

Workshops: See signup sheet circulated in class.

### Reading Schedule:

- T 1/29      Adrienne Rich, "[Diving Into the Wreck](#)" + Anne Boyer, "[Some Rules for Teachers](#)" + Giorgio Agamben, "The Idea of Prose"  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Diving into the Wreck
- Th 1/31      Gloria Anzaldúa, "[How to Tame a Wild Tongue](#)" + media in class: "[The Perfect Home: 50 Years at Lincoln Center](#)" + "[The Case Against Lincoln Center](#)" (1968)
- T 2/5      Teju Cole, "A Piece of the Wall" (Twitter Poem) + Wayne Koestenbaum, "Assignments" + media: "[Reggie Watts disorients you in the most entertaining way](#)" (2012)  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Koestenbaum Assignment
- Th 2/7      Layli Long Soldier, "[38](#)" + Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "Introduction: This Land," from *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* + media in class: Woody Guthrie, "[This Land is Your Land](#)" + Postcommodity, "[Repellent Fence](#)"
- T 2/12      NO CLASS *readings for 2/14*  
**Assignment for Thursday:** "I began the day." Optional: Incorporate alternative spacing

- Th 2/14 Renee Gladman, *Calamities* + (optional) Thom Donovan, “Working at the Threshold of Prose” + media: Renee Gladman, images from *Prose Architectures*
- T 2/19 Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women* (first half) + media: Amy Sillman and Lisa Robertson, “[Draft of a Voiceover for Split Screen Video](#)”  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Stream of consciousness
- Th 2/21 Anne Boyer, *Garments Against Women* (second half) + media: Amy Sillman and Lisa Robertson, “[Draft of a Voiceover for Split Screen Video](#)”
- T 2/26 Maggie Nelson, from *Bluets*  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Writing from color
- Th 2/28 Wayne Koestenbaum, from “On Doodles, Drawings, Pathetic Erotic Errands, and Writing,” *My 1980s* + Wayne Koestenbaum, “Fun Factory Poetics” + (optional) Gloria Anzaldua, “Creativity and Switching Modes of Consciousness”
- T 3/5 “Prologue: The Path of Strangers” from *Lose Your Mother*  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Take a digital photo of your commute between school and home (or work). Search for unusual perspectives or memorable moments that make your commuting route unique and meaningful. Bring a printout of your photo to class
- Th 3/7 Ronaldo Wilson, “Lives,” from *The Racial Imaginary, Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind*, ed. Claudia Rankine, Beth Loffreda and Max King Cup + Harryette Mullen, “[Elliptical](#)”
- T 3/12 Tommy Pico, “Nature Poem” + Jean Baudrillard, from *America*  
**Assignment for next Tuesday:** Nature poem
- Th 3/14 NO CLASS (Instructor at Conference) *readings for 3/19*
- T 3/19 Roy Kiyooka, Letters + Hettie Jones & Helene Dorn + media: Susan Sontag, “Directions: Write, Read, Rewrite. Repeat Steps 2 and 3 as Needed”  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Letter
- Th 3/21 Walter Mosley, “For Authors, Fragile Ideas Need Loving Every Day” + media: “[Reggie Watts on Never Writing his Materials in Advance](#)” + DJ Rupture, [Gold Teeth Thief](#) + Christina Katopodis [The Walden Soundscape](#)
- T 3/26 NO CLASS (Instructor at Conference) *readings for 3/19*

- Th 3/28 David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"  
**Assignment for Tuesday:** Telephone book
- T 4/2 Eve Sedgwick, from *A Dialogue on Love* + media: Joan Didion "[On Keeping a Notebook](#)"  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Notebook reflection
- Th 4/4 Audre Lorde, from *Zami*
- T 4/9 Jennifer Chang, "Statement of Purpose," from *The Racial Imaginary*  
**Assignment for Thursday:** Statement of Purpose
- Th 4/11 Mirene Arsanios, "[Many Englishes: on Editing and Power](#)" + Carmen Gimenez Smith, "[Twenty Two Poem Hacks](#)"
- T 4/16 Ta-Nehisi Coates, from *Between the World and Me* + media: Ta-Nehisi Coates videos on writing in *The Atlantic* + James Baldwin "[A Letter to my Nephew](#)"
- Th 4/18 **Due in Class: Portfolio Paper #1**  
**Assignment for Tuesday** (post-Spring Break): Letter revisited
- T 4/23 NO CLASS *Spring Recess*
- Th 4/25 NO CLASS *Spring Recess*
- T 4/30 Student Workshops
- Th 5/2 Student Workshops
- T 5/7 Student Workshops
- Th 5/9 **Due in class: Portfolio Paper #2**  
Student Workshops
- T 5/14 **Due in class: Final Portfolio**  
Final Day, TBD

Course Requirements:

**20% In-class writing notebook:** Throughout many of our class sessions, you will be asked to write for 10-15 minutes in response to a prompt (at times, based on the readings). These low-stakes written responses are a place to explore your thoughts about the material we'll be reading, and help you generate ideas for more formal written assignments. Although your

in-class journal writing and reading responses will be included in your final portfolio, I will be grading them only for completeness (not for grammar!). In-class journaling requires you to come to class on time; journal entries cannot be made up in the event of absence or lateness. This journal makes up a significant portion of the grade.

**10% Weekly Creative Assignments:** The first essay is a response paper addressing one of the readings. This paper emphasizes synthesis and detail. Instructions for this essay will be circulated in class in advance of the deadline.

**20% Portfolio Paper #1 (3-5 pages):** Choose one prompt from class so far. Expand significantly on what you've produced, allowing yourself to develop this into a completed piece. Consider that you might allow the original prompt to take you somewhere unexpected. As you expand, consider, but don't feel beholden to, genre. Is this a personal essay? A piece of experimental nonfiction? Is it reportage? A general sense of direction will be useful even as you allow yourself to deviate from genre constraints.

**20% Portfolio Paper #2 (3-5 pages):** Choose a second prompt from class so far. Expand significantly on what you've produced, allowing yourself to develop this into a completed piece. As you work on this, consider how this piece is in relation to your first Portfolio Paper, and attempt to articulate a connection. Perhaps the pieces are stylistically similar. Perhaps both address related broad themes. Perhaps one expands on points the other made. Allow yourself to take risks and experiment with this second piece, while also considering how these pieces might stand together in one portfolio.

**20% Final Portfolio:** Each student will hand in one final portfolio at the end of the semester. The portfolio includes **500 words** synthesizing your evolving relationship to writing over the course of the semester; **Portfolio Paper #1** (edited); **Portfolio Paper #2** (edited); one typed and edited journal entry reflection related to themes you're discussing in the rest of the portfolio.

**10% Participation:** Class participation involves active listening: taking notes, arriving on time for class, engaging with the group in a thoughtful and respectful manner, and speaking in class when engaged or during group discussion.

**Course Description:** This course is called "Writing Nonfiction: Everyday" after a quote by Anne Boyer, "Everyday I have a list called 'Everyday.'" English 211w is a writing course in the housed in the department of English. Through structured reading, writing and conversation, this course privileges a "poetics" of narrative disruption and strategic intervention "at the boundaries" of voicing, media, genre and literary canon. In the course we will maintain a regular writing practice through in-class free-writing, pre-writing, and group work; peer reviews and draft revisions; and formal essays.

Every text assigned is aimed to aid us in thinking deeply about language and power. We consider culturally-imposed notions of gender, sexuality, race, class and citizenship as inputs that determine or complicate our relationship to the language(s) of power. We will acknowledge settler colonial dynamics and read literary works that build, create or sometimes destroy their own archives. We'll spend time with key visual and sonic inputs in expanding our understanding of what a text looks - and sounds - like.

**Student-Centered Learning:** This course is an adventure in collaborative and student-centered learning (often called student-centered pedagogy). That means that we all share responsibility for the quality of discussion and kinds of learning that we do. Your thoughts and analyses are key to our work, and part of my job is to join you in the process of exploring how to express these ideas creatively and effectively.

**Evaluation and grading:** Portfolio Papers will be graded based on timely completion, fulfillment of stated requirements, and effort. Late and incomplete assignments will drop your assignment grade by 1/3 letter grade for each day past the due date unless I am notified in advance. All other written material, including drafts and revisions, in-class free-writing, and other informal writing will be assessed for effort, content, quantity, and timely completion.

**Learning objectives:**

1. Development of critical and analytical skills through close readings of materials to be explored in discussion, peer work, and other individual and group activities. The goal is to improve reading and writing skills with an emphasis on the ability to summarize content and main ideas, analyze motive and meaning, and state observations and opinions.
2. Identification of different genres and modes of Nonfiction writing – including narration, analysis, argument, reflection – and the various social and cultural constructs that can influence them.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and I have a zero tolerance policy. The result will be a failure on the assignment and potentially the course, and may warrant college disciplinary action. See CUNY's policy on academic integrity: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>.

**Writing Center:** Located in Kiely Hall 229, staffed by tutors trained to help you revise your writing at various stages. If you believe you need additional help with your writing, or if I ask you to set up a regular meeting with a tutor, you should make an appointment at least one week prior to an assignment due date. Online help is also available at their website: <http://qcpages.qc.edu/qcsw>.

**Special Accommodation:** If you have a learning, sensory, or physical reason for special accommodation in this class, please inform me and contact the Office of Special Services: Kiely Hall 171, 718-997-5870.