

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE  
SCHOOL OF CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION

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CREATIVE NONFICTION

CWRI20005  
SUBJECT GUIDE

Semester One, 2020



Bookshop in Lisbon, Portugal.

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**Subject Co-ordinator:**

Dr Maria Tumarkin  
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Email: m.tumarkin@unimelb.edu.au  
Consultation Times: By appointment

**Availability:**

2<sup>nd</sup>-year subject, 12.5 pts

**Contact:**

A 2.5 hours workshop each week of a 12-week semester

**Attendance:**

**Students are required to attend 80% of classes.** Your attendance will be monitored. Without documented evidence explaining attendances of below 80% you will FAIL this subject.

**Class Participation & Contribution:**

Creative Nonfiction is a workshop-based subject. Students formally present their own writing during the semester and are asked to respond to other students' written work. Additionally, each student is expected to introduce writing from the course reading material at the workshop on at least one occasion during the semester. **Students will choose a reading to introduce to the class as well as the week in which to workshop their writing in Week 1 of the semester. More specific information regarding both presentations and workshopping will be provided in Week 1.**

**When it's your turn to workshop:**

Students' pieces for workshopping must be handed out in class a week in advance or, in exceptional circumstances, uploaded on Canvas at least three days prior so as to give workshop participants an opportunity to engage with materials at their own pace and to develop a detailed response before coming to class.

**Readings:**

This semester all **readings are online only. The can be found under 'Modules' on Canvas.** Keep scrolling if you can't see them straight away.

**Content Notes:**

You will find content notes (sometimes referred to as 'trigger warnings') in the unit guide and on Canvas identifying readings that could be distressing to some students. If there is some specific subject-matter you would like to be given a prior warning about or additional support in reading and discussing, please speak to your tutor and let them know. **Please provide content notes on your workshopping drafts if dealing with traumatic or potentially distressing material as a courtesy to other students.**

We use content notes to give other people a heads-up and an opportunity to decide how best to engage with the difficult material; we do not use them to silence or to discourage students from tackling hard topics.

## Teaching Team:

Dr Maria Tumarkin (Coordinator)  
Dr Suzanne Hermanoczki  
Dr Ellena Savage  
Romy Ash  
Sally Olds  
Nicola Redhouse

Emails and consultations times of the teaching staff will be advised in Week One.

**We are not generic ‘uni lecturers and tutors’. No one is, in fact. We are published writers. We are scholars. We do lots of things (too many sometimes) in the world beyond academia.**

### Here are our brief bios:

**Dr Maria Tumarkin (Coordinator)** writes books, essays, reviews, and pieces for performance and radio; she collaborates with sound and visual artists and has had her work carved into dockside tiles. She is the author of four books of ideas. The latest, *Axiomatic* (Brow Books), won the 2018 Melbourne Prize for Literature’s Best Writing Award and was shortlisted for the Stella Prize & the Prime Minister’s, NSW and Vic Premiers’ Awards. *Axiomatic* is a finalist in the National Book Critics Circle Award (US). Maria holds a PhD in cultural history and is a senior lecturer in the creative writing program at the University of Melbourne.

*Pronouns:* she, her

**Dr Suzanne Hermanoczki** is an academic, writer, and teacher of nonfiction and fiction. Her critical, creative, and multilingual writing on death and photography, trauma and the immigrant journey, memory and postmemories, code-switching and bi/multi-cultural identity, gringos and magic realism, have been published in local and international publications including, *The Australian Association of Writing Programs*, *The Australian Multilingual Writing Project*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *Hong Kong U Writing: An Anthology*, *Post - La Revue Journal*, *TEXT Journal*, *Verge Anthology* and *Writing From Below*. Highly commended in 2018 for the *AAWP/ASSF Short Story Prize* and winner of the 2014 inaugural *Affirm Press Creative Writing Prize*, she has written two novels (still awaiting publication). She has a PhD and Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne, where she currently teaches.

*Pronouns:* she, her

**Dr Ellena Savage** is an author and academic whose work interrogates the nexus of the intimate/public, and the interplay of gender, sexuality, capital, and public space therein. She is an advocate for new and innovative nonfiction practices, and over the past decade, has experimented with the essay and life writing, artist collaborations, performance, and independent publishing. As an editor and event organiser, Ellena has helped bring hundreds of emerging writers’ work to publication and public performance. Her own work has been published in *Sydney Review of Books*, *Paris Review Daily*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Cosmonaut’s Avenue*, *Literary Hub*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Cordite*, and elsewhere, and in her books *Yellow City* (The Atlas Review, 2019) and *Blueberries* (Text Publishing Australia and Scribe UK, 2020).

Ellena is a Marten Bequest Travelling Scholar, and she has a PhD in Creative Writing with a focus on feminist literary criticism and the contemporary essay.

*Pronouns:* she, her

**Romy Ash** is a writer of fiction and non-fiction. Her novel *Floundering* was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin, and many other awards. She writes regularly for *The Saturday Paper*, and has done so for the last six years. Her short stories and essays have been published widely in such places as *The Best Australian Short Stories*, *The Best Australian Essays* and *The Griffith Review*, *Meanjin*, etc.

*Pronouns:* she, her

**Sally Olds** is a writer from Queensland, living in Narrm/Melbourne. She writes about labour, gender, and technology across a variety of nonfiction forms, and is currently working on a project about wealth, cryptocurrencies, and utopianism. From 2013-2016, she was an editor of the magazine *Bumf*, a publisher of short and experimental texts from Australian and international writers. She has worked as a radio host for No Brow Art Show (4ZZZ FM), convened and chaired conference panels, and organised readings and other literary/arts events in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne. In 2019, Sally completed her MA at the University of Melbourne in creative writing, focusing on the essay form. You can read some of her writing in *AQNB*, *un Magazine*, *Australian Humanities Review*, *Howl & Echoes*, and *Homintern*. Sally is the writer-in-residence for Precog, a club night held in Narrm.

*Pronouns:* she, her

**Nicola Redhouse** writes nonfiction and fiction, and in both she gravitates towards unpicking the knots of mental experience, often looking to expose the immaterial forces at play in our mental lives to ask: what are we if not sentient beings for whom feeling is meaningful? In her debut nonfiction book *Unlike the Heart: a memoir of brain and mind* (UQP, March, 2019) she took up this question using her own postnatal story. She has written on topics ranging from trans and non-binary voice therapy, to space travel, to the conundrum of objective measurement in mental health, for publications including *The Age*, the *Australian*, *The Monthly*, *Island* and *Women's Agenda*. Her short stories often hover the borders of neuroscientific anomaly (where our brains and selves blur), and appear in *Meanjin*, *Best Australian Stories*, and the *Big Issue Fiction Edition*. She is just starting a PhD by Practice Research Symposium at RMIT, looking at how she can draw on psychoanalytic ideas about thinking to shift her practices as a writer.

*Pronouns:* she, her

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**Assessment:**

The assessment for this subject has two components:

**1. Class Participation, Presentation and Workshopping (10%)**

Students are expected to do weekly reading before each workshop. In Week 1, all students choose one of the readings they'll introduce to the rest of the class in the course of the semester. It is also a requirement of the subject that students participate in workshopping of their and other students' work. Workshopping weeks are allocated in Week 1. **Students must hand out printed copies of their draft one week before their workshopping session.** In exceptional circumstances, students are allowed to email their tutor, or upload on LMS, a copy of their draft **3 days** prior to the workshopping session.

**2. Writing Folio (90%)**

Your writing folio consists of:

- A 2,500-word primary Creative Nonfiction piece springing out of themes and/or ideas introduced in the subject – **55% (due 9 June 2020, 11.59pm via LMS);**
- A secondary Creative Nonfiction piece, between 500 and 1,000 words, on a different theme to the one explored in your primary CNF piece – **15% (due 9 April 2020, 11.59pm via LMS);**
- A 1,000-word critical essay on at least two key themes/ideas/readings discussed within the subject, including issues that may have emerged during workshopping – **20% (due 9 June 2020, 11.59pm via LMS).**

**Students cannot write on the same theme twice.**

**Guidelines:**

Workshopping, Presentation and Assessment Guidelines can be found on Canvas under Modules / Guidelines.

**Assessment Submission:**

**All written work for assessment must be submitted on LMS/Canvas.** No paper submissions are required for this subject.

**Extensions for written work and penalties for late work:**

It is your responsibility to submit work by the due date. If for some reason you think you cannot make a deadline, please discuss the matter with the subject co-ordinator or tutor prior to the due date. Extensions will only be granted in special circumstances. Extensions will not be granted on final pieces of assessment without supporting documentation.

**Work submitted after the due date without an extension will be penalised 2% per day.** Work submitted after two weeks of the assessment due date without a formally approved application for special consideration and an extension will only be marked to a pass/fail basis if accepted. **All requests for extensions beyond 5 working days for the two final pieces must be accompanied by an application for Special Consideration with supporting documentation.**

### **Special Consideration:**

Special Consideration is available when:

- a. at any time, your work during the academic year has to a **substantial degree** been hampered by illness or other cause; or
- b. you have been **prevented** by illness or other cause from preparing for all or part of a component of assessment; or
- c. you were to a **substantial degree** adversely affected by illness or other cause during the performance of a component of assessment.

Requests for Special Consideration are lodged online at <https://sis.unimelb.edu.au/cgi-bin/special-consideration.pl> and the requested supporting documentation must be submitted before the application will be considered. Please note the timelines for the lodgement of special consideration. Applications that are lodged outside of these timelines will not be considered.

### **Time Commitment:**

We are asking you to spend a lot of time doing weekly reading before class because we believe that's how we learn best. Reading generously, critically, acutely, attentively. Re-reading. Taking notes. Scribbling in the margins. Following trails and references. **We estimate that you might need to spend around 4-5 hours per week on doing weekly reading.**

From Week 3 onwards you'll be asked to read and consider other students' work. This shouldn't be rushed. Just like you, your peers deserve your time and attention. Time spent away from class on workshopping is part of the hidden 'curriculum'. **We estimate that you'll need to spend at least 1 hour per week from Week 3 on providing feedback to other students' work.** Please remember that learning how to workshop takes time.

### **Workshopping:**

Our role is to help everyone in the class to do the best writing they can. We want each student to feel energised and full of ideas on how to develop their writing – not distressed or paralysed – after their work is workshopped. Most people feel vulnerable when their work is discussed and critiqued, so the classroom has to be a safe space founded on trust and respect. At the same time, please remember: it's not personal.

### **Students presenting their work:**

- Should bring 15 copies of the work to class the week before they are due to workshop their piece. In exceptional circumstances, workshop materials can be uploaded on LMS or emailed to your tutor at least three days in advance.
- Should include with their draft a paragraph or two explaining what they are trying to do in their piece: what themes they are tackling, what writing tools and techniques they are attempting to draw on, what sort of structure they have in mind, how they are experimenting (if they are). This paragraph may take the form of a short(ish) letter addressed to the class. Students should include some questions they have for their fellow students – e.g. does X work? Which bit did you find most compelling, interesting? Is there anything you have learned from reading my piece? What are the gaps? Where do I lose you?
- Should include content notes at the top of their draft if relevant.
- Should consider deeply the ethics and be prepared to discuss it in class.

### **Students responding to other students' work:**

- Should provide written feedback to the student whose work is being workshopped, either in a standalone paragraph or in the form of comments written on the draft;
- Should understand that each piece of writing needs to be engaged with on its own terms – the starting point is not the kind of writing they like or do themselves, but what the student in front of them is attempting to do;
- Should not use a red pen. We are not at school!
- Should make sure that if they identify a weakness or problem, they respectfully suggest a remedy;
- Should treat others as they would like to be treated.

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## CREATIVE NONFICTION CWRI20005 WORKSHOP PROGRAM

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### **Week One: week starting 2 March 2020**

#### ***Introduction to Creative Nonfiction***

Week One introduces students to the genre of Creative Nonfiction (CNF) – what it is, how to talk about it, and how to begin to write it. Creative Nonfiction encompasses essays (personal, descriptive, ideas-based, narrative-led), memoirs of any length, literary journalism, nature and travel writing, cultural commentary, meditations on ideas, as well as all kinds of hybrid and experimental forms.

Creative Nonfiction, and the multiplicity of sub-genres it contains, is currently undergoing something of a renaissance, particularly in the English-speaking world. Even the notoriously conservative Nobel Prize committee felt compelled to award Svetlana Alexievich, a Belarusian writer of narrative nonfiction, the 2015 Nobel Prize for Literature. It's the first time in fifty years that the Nobel Prize has recognised nonfiction writing as having the same *literary* value as fiction. (We will read Alexievich in Week 5.) Welcome to CNF!

**You don't want to miss your class in Week One. Workshopping and presentation weeks plus set up for the whole semester**

#### **Required Reading:**

We will start by reading pieces written by students in this subject in the last few years and subsequently published in a number of Australian literary magazines.

- Nayuka Gorrie's 'White Psycho Dream Girls', *Kill Your Darlings*, 29 July 2019
- Tiia Kelly's 'Super Duper Trouper', *Voiceworks* issue 116, 2019
- Grace Hart, 'Reception', *Voiceworks*, Issue 109, Spring 2017, pp. 9-171
- Emma Hardy, 'Pink Slows The Heartbeat', *Voiceworks*, Issue 110, Summer 2017
- Lola Button, 'Notes from A Strip Club', *The Monthly*, December 2018-January 2019

#### **Further Reading:**

Let me put you out of your misery: no definitive texts on Creative Nonfiction exist in the world. The best way to understand and appreciate the genre is to read as many varied, high-quality CNF essays and books as you can and to come to your classes across the semester. There are, however, some good, non-definitive books that may give you ideas to chew on and a bit of direction:

- Phillip Lopate, *To Show and to Tell: The Craft of Literary Nonfiction*, Free Press, New York, 2013
- Tracy Kidder & Richard Todd, *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction*, Random House, New York, 2013
- Sondra Perl & Mimi Schwartz, *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2006

## **Week Two: week starting 9 March 2020**

### *Craft*

### **PRESENTATIONS START**

A key distinction between CNF and ‘straight’ nonfiction (i.e. books of history, popular science, travel, journalism) is that CNF writers do much more than inform or educate their readers. They also seek to entertain, engage, enchant, transport, bring to life, challenge. CNF authors write to make readers think and see the world anew. All the while – and this is crucial! – they retain a steadfast commitment to telling true stories, undertaking rigorous research, honouring the complexities and ambiguities inherent in human experience, and doing justice to both their subject *and* their subjects. To this effect, CNF writers pay a great deal of attention to craft: language, structure, narrative development, voice.

**The ‘creative’ in *Creative Nonfiction* doesn’t stand for being creative with truth, rather for being creative with the form in which you seek to capture and distill the truth.**

**David Finkel’s *Thank You for Your Service* and Chloe Hooper’s *The Arsonist* are masterclasses in how to craft a gripping, complex narrative backed by a tremendous amount of research, a searching intelligence and an ethical vision. Both books deal with a confronting subject. This is by no means a prerequisite. Creative nonfiction can and does take on all manner of subjects, big, small, heavy, feather-light etc – see next week’s readings for some examples of the breadth of CNF concerns. **And by the way, do read ahead if you are looking for ideas/possibilities/jolts/inspiration.****

**Annie Dillard** has been a pioneer of genre-resistant nonfiction ever since her 1974 book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. We will turn our attention to unclassifiable nonfiction in Week 8, but this week we will read Dillard’s reflections on being a writer because they may just help some of you do your best work this semester. In her essay, Dillard uses the masculine pronoun ‘he’ quite a lot. This will be grating for many (it is for us too), but Dillard comes from a different era – she was born in 1945 – so imagine it’s ‘they’, put your righteous indignation in your back pocket (please) and read on.

**Adrian Nicole Le Blanc’s *The Random Family*** was published in 2003. Le Blanc spent over a decade being ‘a fly on the wall’ following a group of people in New York City’s borough of the Bronx. Utterly immersive, fast-moving, hotly compassionate, filled with precise and gripping details, the book makes you feel transported into a world you’re unlikely to have ever had an access to otherwise. Jessica, her physical and emotional world, her family – don’t they feel alive! Yet Le Blanc’s approach poses a whole lot of ethical questions. Let’s talk about Le Blanc’s absence from the text (Where is she? Who is she?)

How does she know all this stuff? Was she there when this or that happened? What did people she write about consent to? Do we need to know?). How do we think through the question of race: Le Blanc is a white writer chronicling lived experiences of communities of colour. Does she need to account explicitly for how she is positioned in relation to those she is writing about? The book was published in 2003. Do we think differently in 2020 about the ethical demands of writing about other people (Week 5 is dedicated to that kind of writing and those kinds of questions, while Week 4 is dedicated to the ethics of writing CNF).

### **Essential Reading:**

**Content Note: Finkel's and Hooper's books explore in depth the traumatic aftermath of wars and bushfires respectively.**

- David Finkel, *Thank You for Your Service*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2013, pp. 3–21
- Chloe Hooper, *The Arsonist*, Penguin Random House, 2018, pp. 3-13
- Annie Dillard, 'A Writer in the World', in *The Abundance*, Canongate, Edinburgh, 2016, pp. 105-115
- Nicole LeBlanc, *Random Family*, Scribner, 2003, pp. 51-55

### **Week Three: week starting 16 March 2020**

*No Subject is Too Big, Too Small, Too Strange or Too Out There*

### **WORKSHOPPING STARTS**

The sky is the limit. Any topic. Any subject. Any question. Music. Sport. Human genome. Lobsters. You can write riveting pieces/books about any topic so long as you do your research, find a compelling way to bring your readers in, have interesting ideas and discoveries to share with your readers, and have a unique perspective and a way of presenting information without 'lecturing'. In class we will discuss what makes the pieces listed below work. What makes them exciting? How do they hold our interest? How is the background research/contextual information integrated? What is the role of the author's voice in making them come together?

### **Essential Reading (breathe! some of these pieces are mercifully short):**

- Zadie Smith, 'Joy', in Zadie Smith, *Feel Free*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2018, pp. 427-435
- Patricia Lockwood, 'The Communal Mind', *The London Review of Books*, vol. 41, no. 4, 21 February 2019
- Eliot Weinberger, 'Changs', in Eliot Weinberger, *An Elemental Thing*, A New Directions Book, 2007, pp. 4-9

- Goenawan Mohamad, 'Not', in Goenawan Mohamad, *In Other Words. Forty Years of Essays*, New South, 2015, pp. 55-58
- David Foster Wallace, 'Tennis Player Michael Joyce's Professional Artistry as a Paradigm of Certain Stuff about Choice, Freedom, Limitation, Joy, Grotesquerie, and Human Completeness', in David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*, Little, Brown and Company, 1997, pp. 213–237

**Further Reading (a tiny sliver of what's out there...):**

- Eula Biss, *On Immunity: An Inoculation*, Graywolf Press, Minnesota, 2014
- Christine Kenneally, *The Invisible History of the Human Race*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2014
- Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender*, W.W. Norton, New York, 2010
- Anna Krien, *Night Games: Sex, Power and Sport*, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2013
- Elizabeth Kolbert, 'Spoiled Rotten', *The New York Times*, 2 July 2012 [online version]
- Christian Ryan (ed.), *The Best Music Writing Under the Australian Sun*, Hardie Grant, Melbourne, 2014
- Zadie Smith, 'The House that Hova Built', *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 September 2012 [online version]
- John Jeremiah Sullivan, *Pulphead*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2011
- David Foster Wallace, 'Tennis, Trigonometry, Tornadoes', *Harper's Magazine*, December 1991, pp. 68–78.
- David Foster Wallace, 'Roger Federer as Religious Experience', *The New York Times*, 20 August 2006 [online version]
- David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2005

**Week Four: week starting 23 March 2020**

***Ethics of Creative Nonfiction***

What are our ethical obligations to the people we are writing about – whether living or dead – and to the subject matter we are examining, and to our readers? Is it OK to make up quotes or create composite characters if they 'help' evoke or communicate a true story? What about condensing the timeline? Can we write about people without their explicit consent? What happens when there are multiple, conflicting versions of the same story? Is there such a thing as emotional truth? What is the role of creative imagination in writing Creative Nonfiction?

No two ways about it – Creative Nonfiction is an ethical minefield.

We start with Jeanine Leane (who teaches in our program!) and her argument about the enduring injuries caused by misrepresentation of indigenous stories, histories and lived experiences in settler texts. She asks: 'If, on the whole, non-Indigenous people are not

reading Indigenous self-representation, how can they write about Indigenous lives and experiences?'

Geoff Dyer, who writes both fiction and nonfiction, argues that the boundary between fiction and nonfiction is increasingly up for grabs and that, instead of getting worried, we should in fact welcome its dissolution. The best work, Dyer says, is being done precisely in this grey zone. Dyer, it should be said, is not alone in this view. What is your take on the ethical implications of Dyer's argument?

Please read an excerpt from John D'Agata's book in conjunction with Laura Miller's review of the book. What are your thoughts on D'Agata's argument that we should not be confusing facts with truth and that fixation on facts can blind us to deeper and more important kinds of truth?

Read Mary Karr's sharp look at the ethics of autobiographical writing and consider her 'shit sandwich' argument. Thoughts?

In her essay, Claire Dederer grapples with the question that most of us can no longer escape: can we still love the art if we loathe the artist?

### **Essential Reading:**

- Jeanine Leane, 'Writing Other People's Stories', *Overland*, Issue 225, Summer 2016
- Geoff Dyer, '“Based on a True Story”: The Fine Line Between Fact and Fiction', *The Guardian*, 6 December 2015
- John D'Agata (with Jim Fingal, fact-checker), *The Lifespan of a Fact*, WW. Norton & Company, 2012, pp. 15–20
- Laura Miller, 'In Defense of Fact Checking', *Salon*, 9 February 2012
- Mary Karr, *The Art of Memoir*, Harper, New York, 2015, pp. 9-26
- Claire Dederer, 'What do we do with the art of monstrous men?', *The Paris Review*, 20 November 2017

### **Week Five: week starting 30 March 2020**

#### *The Lives of Others*

One of the most important features of CNF is its ability to offer enduring insights into the lives and experiences of people who are sometimes radically different to ourselves – particularly those who are culturally invisible, marginal, routinely misrepresented or essentially voiceless. Consider how this week's authors portray and make space for their subjects' experiences, voices and worldviews, particularly in light of these subjects' extreme vulnerability. Going deep into other people's lives is \*always\* a fraught undertaking. This week we will continue thinking hard about ethics of writing about the lives of others.

### Essential Reading:

[Content Note: Most readings for this week deal with explicitly traumatic material. Please take care when reading. In her piece Melissa Lucashenko chronicles lives of indigenous women deeply and enduringly affected by domestic violence. Hersey's subject is Hiroshima immediately before and after the 1945 atomic bomb explosion, while Alexievich takes us deep inside the immediate aftermath of the catastrophic Chernobyl nuclear reactor accident.]

- Melissa Lucashenko, 'Sinking Below Sight', *Griffith Review* 41
- Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions*, Coffee House Press, Minneapolis, 2017, pp. 7-33
- Svetlana Alexievich, *Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*, Dalkey Archives Press, London, 2005, pp. 1–23
- Barbara Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*, Spiegel & Grau, New York, 2009, pp. 3–7
- John Hersey, *Hiroshima*, Penguin Books, 1946, pp. 3–23
- Timmah Ball, 'Imagining Lisa: Dreaming in Urban Areas', *Blak Brow*

### Further Reading:

- William Dalrymple, *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*, Bloomsbury, London, 2009
- Dave Eggers, *Zeitoun*, Hamish Hamilton, Melbourne, 2009
- Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 2001
- Chloe Hooper, *The Tall Man*, Hamish Hamilton, Melbourne, 2008
- Pico Iyer, *The Lady and the Monk: Four Seasons in Kyoto*, Knopf, New York, 1991
- Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Shadow of the Sun*, Alfred A. Knopf, Toronto, 2001 [first published 1998]
- Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Soccer War*, Granta Books, London, 1998 [first published 1978]
- John Krakauer, *Into The Wild*, Pan Books, London, 2007
- Susan Orlean, *The Bullfighter Checks Her Make-up: My Encounters with Extraordinary People*, Random House, New York, 2001
- Asne Seierstad, *The Bookseller of Kabul*, Little Brown and Company, New York, 2003
- Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Crown Publishers, New York, 2010
- Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, a Universe: Settling Accounts with Torturers*, Pantheon Books, New York, 2010
- Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2013

- Arnold Zable, *Violin Lessons*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2011
- Fiona Wright, *Small Acts of Disappearance. Essays on Hunger*, Giramondo, Sydney, 2015

## **Week Six: week starting 6 April 2020**

### ***First-Person Creative Nonfiction***

How can autobiographical material be the basis for writing that goes beyond the personal: the kind that makes meaningful connections to larger questions of culture and to shared human experiences? That has something new or unexpected to say? This week we look at writing that takes a lived personal experience as the starting point, not the destination. And we move beyond the insidious ‘r’ word – *relatable* – in our examination of enduring and affecting first-person nonfiction.

One of this week’s pieces, ‘My Bung Leg and Me’, was written by creative writing student Jack Francis Musgrave for this subject in 2016. It was accepted for publication before Jack unexpectedly, inexplicably, passed away. We honour Jack’s talent and his memory by including his funny, true words among those of distinguished writers.

### **Essential Reading (again, don’t be alarmed, many of these pieces and excerpts are short):**

**[Content Note:** Mohsin Hamid’s piece touches on a terrorist attack in Pakistan; an extract from Maxine Beneba Clark’s memoir takes up close to the insidious manifestations of everyday racism.]

- Alison Whittaker, 'Aboriginemo', in Anita Heiss (ed.), *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2018, pp. 264-270
- Maxine Beneba Clark, *The Hate Race*, Hachette Australia, 2016, pp. 194-214
- Mohsin Hamid, ‘Avatar in Lahore’, in Mohsin Hamid, *Discontents and Its Civilisations*, Hamish Hamilton, 2014, pp. 45-47
- Jack Francis Musgrave, ‘My Bung Leg and Me’, *Voiceworks* 106, Summer 2016/2017, pp. 55-61
- Adolfo Aranjuez, 'Growing Up Queer: A Filipino Perspective', *Dumbo Feather*, 8 December 2017
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2006, pp. 1-23 6.5Week\_BECHDEL.pdf
- Roz Chast, *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant*, Bloomsbury, New York, 2014, pp. 2-7, 10-15, 28-36

### Further Reading:

- Alison Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, 2012
- Meghan Daum, *The Unspeakable*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2014
- Ali Coby Eckermann, *Too Afraid to Cry*, Ilura Press, 2013
- Durga Chew-Bose, *Too Much and Not The Mood*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2017
- Roxanne Gay, *Bad Feminist*, Harper Collins, New York, 2014
- Leslie Jamison, *The Empathy Exams*, Granta, London, 2014
- Jeanine Leane, *Purple Threads*, UQP, Brisbane, 2011
- Ann Patchett, *Truth and Beauty. A Friendship*, Fourth Estate, London, 2004
- David Small, *Stitches*, W.W. Norton & Co, New York, 2009
- Gary Shteyngart, *Little Failure*, Hamish Hamilton, New York, 2014
- Rebecca Solnit, *Faraway Nearby*, Granta, London 2013
- Wells Tower, 'The Old Man at Burning Man', in John Jeremiah Sullivan (ed.) *The Best American Essays 2014*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014, pp. 165–185
- Lindy West, *Sbrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*, Hachette Books, 2016

### **EASTER BREAK: FRIDAY 10 APRIL TO SUNDAY 19 APRIL**

### Week Seven: week starting 20 April 2020

#### *Writing From A State of Emergency*

Increasingly for many people this moment in time feels pre-cataclysmic. 'This is not normal', we keep telling ourselves. Just this summer in Australia is enough to make you question everything, including your own commitment to writing. What's the point? Who needs words when we're losing so much that cannot ever be replaced?

This is what this week is about: writing from and in a State of Emergency.

**[Content Note:** It's an emergency week and all of the readings below deal with distressing, traumatic material. Please take care when reading.]

### Essential Reading:

- Behrouz Bouchani, *No Friend But The Mountain*, Picador, 2018
- Mireille Juchau, 'What Should We Send Into Space as a New Record of Humanity?', *Lithub*, 22 April 2019
- Briohny Doyle, 'Does Writing Books Still Matter in an Era of Environmental Catastrophe?', *The Guardian*, 7 February 2020
- Teju Cole, 'A Defense of Art In Troubled Times', *Art Basel* 48

- Brenda Walker, 'Nothing to be done. On Beckett and Australian bushfires', *TLS*, 21 February 2020

### **Week Eight: week starting 27 April 2020**

*Unclassifiable Creative Nonfiction. Also: Boundary-Crossing, Genre-Resistant, Convention-Busting, Multi-Platform.*

One of the most thrilling developments in the field of Creative Nonfiction is the rise of unclassifiable, genre-busting works. Plus, there's the proliferation of CNF works engaging with visual and sonic cultures (take note, for example, of the emergence of Sonic Nonfiction, Graphic Essay, Audiovisual Nonfiction, Performance Essay, Radio Essay etc.) This week we'll look at a selection of unique works that resist classification.

#### **Essential Reading:**

- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*, Graywolf Press, New York, 2015, pp. 48–55, 58–61, 106–107
- Anne Carson, *Nox*, New Directions Publishing, New York, 2010, various pages
- Ellena Savage, 'Blueberries', in Ellena Savage, *Blueberries*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2020
- Eliot Weinberger, 'In Blue', in Eliot Weinberger, *Oranges and Peanuts for Sale*, New Directions Publishing, New York, 2009, pp. 147–150

### **Week Nine: week starting 4 May 2020**

#### *Changing Minds*

As a writer of nonfiction, you may want to weigh in on blazing cultural debates, put forward a complex argument, lay bare a festering injustice, go after one of your culture's blindspots. In other words, you may want to try to change your reader's mind. But what models of this get-in-the-head-of-your-reader writing are out there – the kind of models that can show a way beyond shouty and shrill rhetoric, formulaic polemics, beyond calling out or preaching to the converted?

Obvious point still worth making: if you want to change other people's minds, you must be up for changing your own.

- Claudia Rankine, *Citizen. An American Lyric*, Penguin Books, 2015, pp. 40–55
- Rebecca Solnit, 'Men Explain *Lolita* To Me', in Rebecca Solnit, *The Mother of All Questions*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2017, pp. 141–149

- Alexis Wright, 'Telling the untold stories: Alexis Wright on censorship', *Overland* Vol. 234, Autumn 2019
- Teju Cole, 'The White Saviour Industrial Complex', in Teju Cole, *Known and Strange Things*, Faber and Faber, London, 2016, pp. 340-349
- Alison Whittaker, *Blakwork*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2018, select pages
- Binyavanga Wainaina, 'How To Write About Africa', *Granta* 92, May 2019

### **Further Reading:**

- Sam Wallman, 'At Work in our Detention Centres: A Guard's Story', *Global Mail*, Available at <http://tgm-serco.patarmstrong.net.au/>
- Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race*, Bloomsbury Circus, London, 2017
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, Spiel & Grau, New York, 2015
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: an American Tragedy*, Random House, New York, 2017
- Natalie Harkin, 'On Responsibility', *Overland*, Autumn 2017, available online

### **Week Ten: week starting 11 May 2020**

#### ***Decentring The Human***

We are not talking about anything *posthuman* this week but rather about the kind of writing that recasts human beings as nothing less or more than equals in a series of profound, formative relationship – people *and* animals, people *and* places they inhabit, people *and* their land, people *and* objects of enduring emotional significance.

### **Essential Reading:**

- Annie Dillard, 'The Death of the Moth', from Annie Dillard, *Holy The Firm*, Perennial Library, 1988
- Rebecca Giggs, 'Whale Fall', *Granta*, Vol. 133, Autumn 2015, pp. 45-53
- Tony Birch, 'Walking and Being', *Meanjin*, Summer 2019
- Eileen Myles, *Afterglow (a dog memoir)*, Grove Atlantic, New York, 2017, pp. 4-10 & 66-75
- Helen MacDonald, *H is for Hawk*, Vintage Books, London, 2015, pp. 46-55

### **Further Reading:**

- Saskia Beudel, *A Country in Mind: Memoir with Landscape*, UWA Publishing, Perth, 2013
- Tony Birch, 'Remembering Steven: A Yarra River Walk', Wheeler Centre, 4 August 2014 <http://www.wheelercentre.com/notes/d24525a88a72> (link available on LMS)
- Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, HarperPerennial, New York, 1998 (originally published in 1974)
- Annie Dillard, *For The Time Being*, Knopf, New York, 1999
- Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, Random House, New York, 1983
- Lauren Elkin, *Flaneuse*
- Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places*, Granta, London, 2007
- Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 2015
- Kim Mahood, *Position Doubtful*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2016, pp. 1-14
- Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things*, Polity, Cambridge, 2008
- Daniel Miller, *Stuff*, Polity, Cambridge, 2010
- Anna Moran, *Love Objects: Emotion, Design and Material Culture*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2014
- Will Self, *Psychogeography*, Bloomsbury, London, 2007
- Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: a History of Walking*, Penguin Books, 2000
- Martin Thomas, *The Artificial Horizons: Imagining Blue Mountains*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2003
- Sherry Turkle, *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2007
- Fiona Wright, 'Perhaps this one will be my last sharehouse', *Sydney Review of Books*, 9 May 2017, available online

### **Week Eleven: week starting 18 May 2020**

#### ***Spotlight on Helen Garner's nonfiction***

OK, time to read Helen Garner. And *about* Helen Garner.

### **Essential Reading:**

[Content Note: Both of Garner's books are unflinching, confronting examinations of human beings' capacity to, under certain kinds of circumstances, inflict the worst kind of suffering on their loved ones.]

- Helen Garner, *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, Pan MacMillan, Sydney, 2004, pp. 3–19, 38–39, 81–86, 125–132
- Helen Garner, *This House of Grief: The Story of a Murder Trial*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 1–9, 195–198, 221–231

- Bernadette Brennan, *A Writing Life. Helen Garner and Her Work*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2017, pp. 198-209, 247-255

### **Further Reading in True Crime genre:**

- John Bryson, *Evil Angels*, Viking, Melbourne, 1985
- Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, Penguin, London, 2008 (first published 1966)
- Gideon Haigh, *Certain Admissions: A Beach, a Body and a Lifetime of Secrets*, Penguin, Melbourne, 2015
- Masha Gessen, *The Brothers: The Road to an American Tragedy*, Riverhead Books, New York, 2015
- Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Vintage Books, New York, 1990
- Janet Malcolm, *Iphigenia in Forest Hills: Anatomy of a Murder Trial*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2011
- John Safran, *Murder in Mississippi*, Hamish Hamilton, Melbourne, 2013
- Asne Seierstad, *One of Us: The Story of Anders Breivik and the Massacre in Norway*, Virago, London, 2015

### **Week Twelve: week starting 25 May 2020**

*The Show Must Go On*

### **BLITZ WORKSHOPPING SESSION FOR ALL STUDENTS**

This week we'll explore how you can continue developing as CNF writers and readers now well past this semester. We'll also let you workshop your primary pieces again (but quickly!) and we will look back at the semester (the word 'debrief' is out of fashion these days) – what worked, what didn't, what soared, what tanked.

Please read Mary Cappello's epic distillation of the kinds of energies that animate creative nonfiction. Which bits seem right to you and which don't?

### **Essential Reading:**

Mary Cappello, 'Wending Artifice: Creative Nonfiction', *The Cambridge Companion to the Autobiography*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 237-251

Thank YOU for this semester.

### **Grading system:**

A standard grading system applies across all Faculties of the University, as follows:

#### **N** 0%-49% **Fail** - *not satisfactory*

- Work that fails to meet the basic assessment criteria;
- Work that contravenes the policies and regulations set out for the assessment exercise;
- Where a student fails a subject, all failed components of assessment are double marked.

#### **P** 50%-64% **Pass** - *satisfactory*

- Completion of key tasks at an adequate level of performance in argumentation, documentation and expression;
- Work that meets a limited number of the key assessment criteria;
- Work that shows substantial room for improvement in many areas.

#### **H3** 65%-69% **Third-class honours** - *competent*

- Completion of key tasks at a satisfactory level, with demonstrated understanding of key ideas and some analytical skills, and satisfactory presentation, research and documentation;
- Work that meets most of the key assessment criteria;
- Work that shows room for improvement in several areas.

#### **H2B** 70%-74% **Second-class honours level B** - *good*

- Good work that is solidly researched, shows a good understanding of key ideas, demonstrates some use of critical analysis along with good presentation and documentation;
- Work that meets most of the key assessment criteria and performs well in some;
- Work that shows some room for improvement.

#### **H2A** 75%-79% **Second-class honours level A** - *very good*

- Very good work that is very well researched, shows critical analytical skills, is well argued, with scholarly presentation and documentation;
- Work that meets all the key assessment criteria and exceeds in some;
- Work that shows limited room for improvement.

#### **H1** 80%-100% **First-class honours** - *excellent*

- Excellent analysis, comprehensive research, sophisticated theoretical or methodological understanding, impeccable presentation;
- Work that meets all the key assessment criteria and excels in most;
- Work that meets these criteria and is also in some way original, exciting or challenging could be awarded marks in the high 80s or above.
- Marks of 90% and above may be awarded to the best student work in the H1 range.

## Notes on PLAGIARISM

It is very important that you are aware of requirements regarding plagiarism.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the use of another person's work without due acknowledgment. Examples include:

- direct duplication, by copying (or allowing to be copied) another's work. This includes copying from a book article, web site, or another student's assignment
- paraphrasing another person's work with minor changes, but keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original;
- piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole;
- submitting an assignment that has already been submitted for assessment in another subject;
- presenting an assignment as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example, another student or a tutor. Plagiarism is academic misconduct, and is taken very seriously by the University and the Faculty of Arts. Any acts of suspected plagiarism detected by your assessors will be followed up, and any students involved will be required to respond via the Faculty and/or University procedures for handling suspected plagiarism. For more information and advice about how to avoid plagiarism, see the University's Academic Honesty page at <http://academichonesty.unimelb.edu.au/advice.html>.

Ensure that you are aware of how to appropriately acknowledge sources in your assignments and what referencing style is expected from you in this subject (please ask your tutor or subject coordinator if unsure).

The Academic Skills Unit (ASU) has a number of free online resources on referencing at: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/asu/resources/referencing/index.html>

## Practical Advice to Students

How to Avoid Plagiarism and Why is Plagiarism so Serious?

Plagiarism is defined as 'the taking and passing off the thoughts, writings, etc, of other people as your own'. In short, it is intellectual theft.

In not crediting the source, a person is guilty of stealing another's research, thinking, writing, or images (intellectual knowledge in all its forms). It is unacceptable at all times; it is completely unacceptable in an intellectual environment such as a university. We take a very dim view of students who engage in plagiarism.

If a student is found to have deliberately plagiarised the work of another — including copying the work of other students — the penalties are severe. The 'best outcome' will be a zero for the particular assessment exercise. You may be failed outright for that subject. If there is reason to believe that you have made a practice of plagiarism, university disciplinary action may be recommended which could result in your expulsion from the university and denial of your degree.