

Winter Quarter 2007 Course Descriptions

Writing 303- THE ART OF NONFICTION: TELLING STORIES BY APPLICATION ONLY!

DEADLINE EXTENSTION: Due Monday, OCTOBER 23 by 5 p.m.

(Applications are no longer being accepted.)

WRITING 303

Alex Kotlowitz

Mondays 2:00-5:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will-through both reading and writing-explore the art of what is often called literary journalism, narrative nonfiction, or what John McPhee calls "the literature of fact." The best of nonfiction narrative wields a fierce power, poking and prodding our preconceptions of the world, pushing us to look at ourselves and others through a different prism. What makes for a compelling story? (What tools might we borrow from fiction?) Why employ the use of narrative? How does it help form our view of people and events? We'll explore the craft of reporting and research which borrows from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, history and sociology - and work with rigor and discipline on the art of good writing. We'll read nonfiction narratives-both book and magazine articles-on a host of subjects, ranging from war and poverty to the environment and sports. We'll work in this class as a professional writer might, from draft to draft. There will be regular writing assignments, and students will be asked to craft a longer narrative on a subject of interest to them. The course will be run as a seminar, so there will be an emphasis on critical class discussion.

MODES OF WRITING: TIME AND CHANCE

WRITING 115-5/115-6 (Winter Quarter)

Professors Gary Saul Morson, Robert Gundlach, Marcia Gealy, and James O'Laughlin

Mondays 2-3:20 p.m.

Wednesdays 2-3:20 p.m.

Winter and Spring Quarters, 2007

This special two-quarter, team-taught course, designed specifically for only freshmen , combines a rigorous, wide-ranging exploration of an important theme with close attention to helping students become strong writers. By listening to lectures given by Professor Morson, participating in discussions led by experienced writing seminar instructors, and

working on their own writing projects, students examine how people understand their choices with respect to the conception of time with which they live. Is time best understood as "open" or "closed"? What relation does ethics have to questions of free will or determinism? When we judge the moral ideas of people in the past, are we right or wrong to assume that the values of our own time offer a standard for judging other times? In planning cities, societies, and our own lives, is it moral to choose what we think is the best or is it more moral to choose flexibility and so not close off too many options? These and other questions will be discussed with reference to a range of texts, including essays by Charles Darwin, William James, Herbert Butterfield, and Stephen Jay Gould, and literary works by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

Through both quarters, students will write steadily, both to improve their writing and to deepen their understanding of the issues they are exploring. In the winter, students will write three essays of intermediate length (4-6 pages), along with several briefer response pieces (1-2 pages each). In the spring, each student will complete a longer research paper on a topic of individual interest (12-15 pages) and continue to write brief response pieces (1-2 pages each). Research projects will be organized in stages, with students receiving instruction and coaching in developing a proposal, conducting research, analyzing material, formulating an argument, drafting, revising, and editing. Students will be evaluated on the basis of their written work and their participation. There will be no exams.

Important note: Students are expected to enroll for both quarters of this special sequence. For WCAS freshmen, the two quarters together will confer one unit of credit toward the distribution requirement in Area V, Values, in Winter Quarter, and one unit of Freshman Seminar credit in Spring Quarter. Freshmen in undergraduate schools other than WCAS should check with their advisers to determine how Modes of Writing may provide credit for requirements in their schools.

For additional information, please contact Stacy Oliver, Assistant Director, Center for the Writing Arts, words@northwestern.edu.