Gallatin School, NYU
Masters Program
Spring 2013
Storytelling: Writing Techniques for Fiction and Nonfiction
ELEC-GG2548

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Storytelling: Writing Techniques for Fiction and Nonfiction

Description: Whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction, story is a key part of prose. Story here is just another name for sequence and structure. Learning the right order for your sentences, paragraphs and pages is as important as putting one foot in front of the other when learning how to walk. We will explore how fiction devices work in nonfiction, and how nonfiction approaches feed fiction.


Specifics: This is a writing class and the emphasis will be on two original papers, one work of fiction and one of nonfiction, approximately ten pages or more. Since learning to write means learning to rewrite, you will do two drafts of each which will be workshopped in class. You will also write two short exercises as a
way of exploring voice. Since so much of writing is rewriting, you will write two drafts of each long paper. Class participation is important and will be added to that grade. More than three absences will reduce your grade. Any plagiarism in a paper will result in that paper being given an F. (Plagiarism is the unattributed use of sentences and paragraphs from other sources.) All papers must be turned in on time, with a double-spaced copy given to the teacher and copies distributed to your fellow students to read.

Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1 (January 31)


Week 2 (February 7)

Writing assignment: A nonfiction anecdote, 1000 words. These will be read aloud and discussed in class.

Reading assignment: "Shooting an Elephant" and "Why I Write" by George Orwell.

Week 3 (February 14)

Reading assignment: First half of The Great Gatsby by Scott Fitzgerald.

Week 4 (February 21)

Writing assignment: a short fictional episode, 1000 words. These will be read aloud and discussed in class.

Reading assignment: the second half of Gatsby.

Week 5 (February 28)

Writing assignment: You will make a brief pitch for the long fiction piece you want to write for feedback and discussion.

Reading assignment: Aquamarine by Carol Anshaw.

Week 6 (March 7)
Writing assignment: First draft of long fiction piece. (The finished draft will be 3000 to 6000 words, but this can be much shorter.)

Reading assignment: The Unbearable Lightness of Being.

Week 7 (March 14)
Reading assignment: More Unbearable.

Spring Break (March 18-March 24)

Week 8 (March 28)
Writing assignment: Second draft of fiction piece.
Reading assignment: For Rouenna.

Week 9 (April 4)
Reading assignment: "Reflections on Gandhi" and "Looking Back on the Spanish War" by George Orwell.
Writing assignment: You will present your ideas for your long nonfiction piece to the class for feedback and discussion.

Week 10 (April 11)
Writing assignment: First draft of long nonfiction. (As with the fiction piece, the final draft will be from 3000 to 6000 words, but the first draft can be much shorter.)
Reading assignment: Begin In the Freud Archives by Janet Malcolm

Week 11 (April 18)
Reading assignment: In the Freud Archives.

Week 12 (April 25)
Writing assignment: Second draft of nonfiction

Reading assignment: Begin Survival at Auschwitz by Primo Levi.

Week 13 (May 2)

Reading assignment: Survival in Auschwitz.

Week 14 (May 9)

Reading assignment: In Cold Blood by Truman Capote.