



# MAS 310

## Non Fiction Writing: Telling True Stories

S1 Day 2014

*Dept of Media, Music & Cultural Studies*

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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Y3A 191F

TBA

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

CUL240 and (MAS210 or MAS211)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

In this unit we look at techniques and structures writers use to engage ever-more fickle audiences. Key readings are drawn from a number of platforms – books, feature articles, blogs, graphic novels, indie publishing – to exemplify some of the more dynamic and engaging recent trends in quality non-fiction writing. We focus in particular on new and novel ways of approaching the past – historical events, family sagas, crimes, eccentric and little known phenomena – and on new modes of writing about science, technology and social change. We consider too the emergence of the celebrity non-fiction author. Students are guided to find and develop their own original stories, and produce pieces of quality writing, suitable for print or broadcast.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Identify and critique key issues raised in the production of literary nonfiction writing

Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies

Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership  
Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Research Portfolio</u>	25%	30 April 2014, by 5pm
<u>Essay</u>	35%	12 June 2014, by 5pm
<u>Tests</u>	30%	In class
<u>Writing exercises</u>	10%	In class

### Research Portfolio

Due: **30 April 2014, by 5pm**

Weighting: **25%**

Task: Submit a research portfolio plus 600-word research report. Details of this assessment will be made available in Week 1.

Marking criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to conduct in-depth, relevant research using a variety of methodologies
- Demonstrated ability to synthesise this research by focusing on one or two key themes to have emerged from it
- Demonstrated ability to reflect on the relevance of such research to your proposed literary nonfiction article

Submission: This assignment must be submitted to the Student Centre (W6A) by 5pm on Wednesday 30 April 2014.

Late Submission: A late penalty of 10% per day will be applied.

Extensions: Extensions will only be granted by the unit convenor in line with university policy.

Turn It In: This unit does not use Turn It In.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies
- Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership

- Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## Essay

Due: **12 June 2014, by 5pm**

Weighting: **35%**

Your task is to write a 2000-word literary nonfiction article suitable for publication in a newspaper or magazine. This is not a university essay and does not require footnotes and bibliography. Further details of the essay assignment will be distributed in Week 1. Worth 35%

Marking Criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to write vividly without using clichés, ‘showing’ not ‘telling’, and an awareness of nuances of meaning
- Evidence of intellectual investigation
- Demonstrated ability to synthesise in-depth research into a compelling, well-structured story
- Evidence that the writer has taken creative risks, both in choice of research/writing topic, and in the writing itself
- Demonstrated ability to write grammatically correct sentences, following accepted English syntax and punctuation.
- Evidence of a ‘voice’ in the piece – a consistent, warm, trust-worthy sense of authority

Submission: This assignment must be submitted to the Student Centre (W6A) by 5pm on Thursday 12 June 2014.

Late Submission: A late penalty of 10% per day will be applied.

Extensions: Extensions will only be granted by the unit convenor in line with university policy.

Turn It In: This unit does NOT use Turn It In.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies
- Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership
- Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## Tests

Due: **In class**

Weighting: **30%**

During the course of the semester you will be required to complete two (2) in-class tests. Each test is worth 15% of your overall mark. Tests will take place during the Week 6 lecture (Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April at 12pm) and during the Week 12 lecture (Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> June at 12pm).

Students will answer questions based on the lecture content for the unit, as well as on the readings. The tests are designed to assist you in demonstrating your knowledge of the unit content as a whole. You will be given 30 minutes in which to write your responses. You are strongly advised to complete all set readings and attend all lectures.

Failure to sit an in-lecture test will result in a mark of zero (0) for that test. If you miss a test due to a medical issue then you will be given the opportunity to sit the test at a later date. In such cases you must supply a medical certificate. Please note that medical certificates issued a significant period after the date of illness may not be accepted as these may be contrary to AMA guidelines for issuing medical certificates (<http://ama.com.au/system/files/node/6505/Guidelines+for+Medical+Practitioners+on+Certificates+Certifying+Illness+2011.pdf>).

Marking Criteria:

- Demonstrated understanding of the question
- Demonstrated knowledge of lecture and reading materials
- Application of materials to set question

Submission: In-class test responses will be handwritten and submitted to the lecturer during the lecture.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and critique key issues raised in the production of literary nonfiction writing

## Writing exercises

Due: **In class**

Weighting: **10%**

### Writing Exercises

The weekly writing workshops are the practical core of this course, so it is essential that the writing exercises be done and brought along in suitable form each week. Each week's exercise must be typed (double-spaced), and you must bring 8 copies to your tutorial for workshopping. A schedule of weekly exercises will be handed out in Week 1. Write approximately 200 words for each exercise.

Marking Criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to write grammatically correct sentences, following accepted English syntax and punctuation.
- Demonstrated ability to write vividly without using cliches, 'showing' not 'telling', and an awareness of nuances of meaning

- Evidence of having understood the set task

Submission: To be handed to your tutor each week during your tutorial. Failure to submit by the end of each tutorial will result in a loss of marks.

Extensions: Extensions can only be granted by the tutor in line with university policy.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership

## Delivery and Resources

Lectures take place on Wednesdays at 12pm in W5C T2.

Lectures *and tutorials* for this unit begin in Week 1.

Technology used: iLearn

Required unit materials: A MAS310 unit reader can be purchased from the Co-op bookshop on campus.

Changes to previous offerings of the unit: In 2014, Dr. Kate Rossmanith is replacing Dr. Peter Doyle as unit convenor. A new assessment task (research portfolio & report) is replacing the previous assessment task (proposal/pitch/outline). The previous assessment task (3 pop quizzes) will be replaced by a new assessment task (2 in-class tests).

To complete the unit satisfactorily, students must attend at least 80% of classes. They must also submit all assessment tasks, and achieve at least a pass grade for their overall grade for the unit.

Essential readings:

- Stephen King, *On Writing*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000
- Luc Sante, 'Resume' from *The Factory of Facts*, New York: Pantheon, 1998, pp3-11.
- Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*, New York: Penguin, pp. 15-17.
- Kate Rossmanith, 'Many me', *The Monthly*, February, 2007, and 'On the Edge' *The Monthly*, August, 2008. Both at <http://www.themonthly.com.au/kate-rossmanith>
- Lane Degregory, 'Narrative is a daily habit', from *Telling True Stories: a Nonfiction Writers' Guide*, Mark Kramer & Wendy Call (eds), New York: Penguin, 2007, pp 240-243.
- Michael Ondaatje, *Coming through slaughter*, Toronto: Anansi, 1976, pp8-14.
- Kate Rossmanith 'The Release Plan', *The Monthly* 2013 <http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/october/1380549600/kate-rossmanith/out-parole>
- Robin Hemley *A field guide to Immersion Writing: memoir, journalism and travel*, Georgia: University of Georgia Press
- David Runciman, 'Everybody gets popped.' *London Review of Books*, V34 no22 22

November 2012, pp5-10

- Gideon Haigh, *On Warne*, Melbourne: Hamish Hamilton, 2012, pp3-14
- Fanny Burney, 'A mastectomy, 30 September, 1811' from *The Faber and Faber Book of Reportage*, John Carey, (ed) London, Faber, 1987.
- Naomi Klein, 'Risky Business,' from *The Nation*, January 5, 2004 <http://www.thenation.com/print/article/risky-business>, accessed 11 February, 2013
- Elmore Leonard, '10 Tips' First published *New York Times*, 16 July, 2001
- Roiphe, K. (2011) 'Janet Malcolm. The Art of Nonfiction No. 4', *The Paris Review*, Spring, volume 196. <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6073/the-art-of-nonfiction-no-4-janet-malcolm>
- Vanessa Berry, *Mirror Sydney* 'Magic Kingdom'. <http://mirrorsydney.wordpress.com/tag/magic-kingdom-lansvale/>
- Erik Lyle, "The Epicenter of Crime: The Hunt's Donuts Story' [http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The\\_Epicenter\\_of\\_Crime:\\_The\\_Hunt's\\_Donuts\\_Story](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Epicenter_of_Crime:_The_Hunt's_Donuts_Story)
- Pat Grant, *The Last Share House*

## Unit Schedule

The weekly schedule for this unit will be available on iLearn.

Please note: the lecture AND the tutorials begin in Week 1.

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## Graduate Capabilities

### Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.



This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Identify and critique key issues raised in the production of literary nonfiction writing
- Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies
- Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership
- Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research Portfolio
- Essay
- Tests
- Writing exercises

## **Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking**

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Identify and critique key issues raised in the production of literary nonfiction writing
- Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research Portfolio
- Essay
- Tests

## **Problem Solving and Research Capability**

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcome**

- Develop literary nonfiction writing through in-depth relevant research using a variety of methodologies

## **Assessment task**

- Research Portfolio

## **Creative and Innovative**

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcomes**

- Apply unique methods of presenting research in writing for a general readership
- Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research Portfolio
- Essay
- Writing exercises

## **Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## **Learning outcome**

- Construct and write stories yourself that fall into the broad category of literary nonfiction writing

## **Assessment tasks**

- Research Portfolio
- Essay

- Writing exercises