



# ENGL714

## Writing Creative Non-Fiction: An Introduction

S2 Evening 2016

*Dept of English*

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#### **Disclaimer**

Macquarie University has taken all reasonable measures to ensure the information in this publication is accurate and up-to-date. However, the information may change or become out-dated as a result of change in University policies, procedures or rules. The University reserves the right to make changes to any information in this publication without notice. Users of this publication are advised to check the website version of this publication [or the relevant faculty or department] before acting on any information in this publication.

## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Rebecca Giggs

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Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

CWPG815

Unit description

In this practical introduction to writing creative non-fiction, students research and write a number of creative (narrative) non-fiction pieces such as memoir, personal essay, and writing about place. We consider what creative non-fiction is, looking at the varied cultural contexts in which these very popular and influential texts are currently being written and published, with a focus on the Australian scene. This introductory course assists students in devising their own topics and developing their skills in primary research methods and narrative techniques.

Assessment is based on participation, practical research tasks and the students' creative non-fiction writing

## 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:

Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.

Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.

Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.

Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.

Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.

Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<a href="#">Participation</a>	20%	Weekly and as scheduled
<a href="#">Minor Creative Work</a>	20%	23 September 2016
<a href="#">Plan for Major Creative Work</a>	10%	17 October 2016
<a href="#">Major Creative Work</a>	50%	09 November 2016

### Participation

Due: **Weekly and as scheduled**

Weighting: **20%**

#### **PARTICIPATION**

Assessed Weeks 01—13.

#### **ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS**

Word count:

- 200 words min.—500 words max. per week (Forum Discussion of Lecture and Readings) x 11 weeks;
- 200 words min.—500 words max. per draft, per week (Workshop Discussion of Peers' Drafts) x 10 weeks; *and*
- 400 words min.—600 words max. (Led Discussion, in the Forum Discussion of Lecture and Readings) x 1 week.

There are THREE WRITTEN COMPONENTS to the participation grade in this unit. Students will be required to **(1)** Participate weekly in their Forum Discussion Group (Lectures and Readings); **and (2)** guide one assigned Forum Discussion Group (Lectures and Readings) in the session (Led Discussion); **and (3)** students will also be required to provide weekly Workshop Feedback to Peers from Weeks 3—12 of the session.

A threshold requirement for participation marks is **attendance and timely involvement** in all the weekly group discussions online (both those dedicated to workshop, and to engagement with the

readings and lectures). Criteria for the assessment of participation includes: evidence of preparedness; timeliness; ability to reflect, critique and to offer insight; synthesis of key ideas and strategies relevant to the unit topics and readings; clear and concise communication; and significant engagement with the opinions of others.

**Attendance is mandatory** in CWPG815/ENGL714—there is no quota of weekly discussions you can miss without impact on your participation grade. Absences will be excused only under exceptional (documented—i.e. with a medical certificate and a Professional Authority Form) circumstances. Students who miss a week due to (again, documented) illness or misadventure will be required to make up that week with additional work, or lose marks.

In addition to attendance and involvement, participation entails **completing all the readings and listening to all the Echo (lecture) recordings**; and **reflecting on those materials** (make notes). In particular, you should think about the **discussion questions** posed by the person who is leading the discussion (see: 'Led discussion', below), and the Unit Convenor, and arrive at your own answers synthesized from what you've read, listened to and thought about.

**Submitting your workshop drafts in a timely fashion and up to standard** will also contribute to your participation mark. Keep in mind that this obligation is owed to a group of adults who are expected to take your work seriously and consider it thoroughly: workshop drafts are due in advance of their analysis. You can read more about workshop procedures and what amounts to 'up to standard' in the Unit Handbook.

Your **feedback to your peers** during workshop will count towards your participation grade. Feedback is to be written down: you may *clearly* annotate the draft provided, or put comments in a separate document or post. **PLEASE NOTE:** Students enrolled in the **internal study-mode** will attend fortnightly workshoping sessions on campus, but will still participate in a Forum Discussion Group (Lectures and Readings) online through iLearn.

A signal mark (pass/fail) will be assigned in the first half of the session to indicate whether or not a student is satisfying the threshold requirements for Participation in the unit. A numerical grade will be awarded at the close of Week 13.

## LED DISCUSSION

One week in the session each student will be designated a **discussion group leader** in the forum assigned to dialogue around the unit readings and lectures. The role of the discussion group leader is to undertake the following:

1. At the beginning of the week (by Monday) devise and contribute **two discussion questions** arising out of that week's readings; *and*
2. In the middle of the week (Tuesday or Wednesday) '**check-in**' on the direction and progress of dialogue, responding briefly to one or two comments posted by peers and/or the Instructor. If there have been no responses to your discussion questions, you might consider rephrasing those questions, clarifying or defining any key terms, offering an example, or posing a tentative response to a question yourself; *and*
3. At the end of the week (Friday) briefly **summarise the main points** in the discussion

and/or any outstanding concerns (which may be picked up by your Instructor).

The discussion group leader therefore takes responsibility for instigating and perpetuating dialogue within the online conversation. Your Unit Convenor will model this process in the first week(s) of the unit, and may also contribute to guiding attention towards specific issues, or in identifying debates, and in summarizing the week's dialogue. Discussion questions should be simple, open starting-points. The Unit Convenor may suggest modifications to discussion questions if relevant. No individual grade is awarded for the Led Discussion, though feedback can be requested—this activity will materially contribute to your overall numerical Participation Grade, worth 20% in CWPG815/ENGL714.

Students should **plan** for routine weekly engagement with the Unit. A good idea is to diarize weekly time-slots in which to not only work on assessments and write up the online postings required, but also to think thoroughly and carefully, over a significant duration, about the readings and the lectures.

### **REGULAR WRITING PRACTICE**

Students are expected to maintain a **Regular Writing Practice** during the semester. A regular writing practice entails putting aside a short amount of time at routine intervals throughout the week (half an hour a day, say, or an hour every third day) to undertake creative writing 'practice'—trialing different writing techniques and styles not necessarily orientated to the course materials. A regular writing practice may also include keeping a notebook or journal in which to record observations from life, writing provocations (newspaper clippings, open ended questions, photographs, passages from the work of other writers), short character sketches and the like. Another aspect of regular writing practice is 'writerly reading'—close analysis of a chapter or essay or poem etcetera, in which the reader specifically looks for how the writer of that text has achieved a certain effect, structured their work, or enacted technique and style.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## **Minor Creative Work**

Due: **23 September 2016**

Weighting: **20%**

## MINOR CREATIVE WORK

Due: Friday, 23 September 2016 (Mid-Session Break).

Word Count: 2,000 words (CWPG815/ENGL714).

The Minor Creative Work in this Unit is 2,000 words of Creative Nonfiction writing: typically in the genre of essay. Students will have the opportunity to Workshop early drafts of the Minor Creative Work in the first half of the session. Criteria for Assessment include: creativity of concept; demonstrated and/or implied understanding of genre and readership; use of technique, structure and language; evidence of development; and presentation.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.

## Plan for Major Creative Work

Due: **17 October 2016**

Weighting: **10%**

### PLAN FOR MAJOR CREATIVE WORK

Due: Monday, 17 October 2016 (Week 10)

Word Count: Up to 500 words (word count will not be strictly enforced in this assessment).

In CWPG815/ENGL714 you have the opportunity to submit and receive early feedback on a plan for your final Major Creative Work. There are two different ways in which you might approach this task, depending on your preferences and the type of work you intend to submit at the end of the semester. You might write a **'pitch'**, as you would do were you to solicit a commission from a journal editor: a pitch outlines the central questions or arguments in a piece of writing, proposes an audience for the work, details any interviews or research the writer might undertake to inform the piece, and argues for how the work contributes to public debate. A pitch is perhaps most appropriate for a Major Creative Work which engages in advocacy or opinion. **Alternatively**, you might follow the **worksheet** uploaded onto iLearn which asks a series of questions about the Major Creative Work and assigns a space for an early draft of the introduction or another section of the work.

The Major Creative Work is not assessed for its fidelity to the plan (ideas with great potential can of course, fall flat in execution; and you may change your mind about your topic and its form

between the plan and the Major Creative Work). A strong grade in the plan assessment does not necessarily ensure a strong grade in the Major Creative Work, and vice-versa: a poor grade in the plan does not necessarily prefigure a poor grade in the Major Creative Work—this is dependent on the development of the concepts and the writing between the plan and Major Work submission. Marking criteria differ between these two assessments. The relationship between the plan and the Major Creative Work will be further discussed in class.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## Major Creative Work

Due: **09 November 2016**

Weighting: **50%**

### MAJOR CREATIVE WORK

Due: Wednesday, 09 November 2016

Word Count:

- 2,000 words (ENGL714); *or*
- 3,000 words (CWPG815).

The Major Creative Work in this Unit is 2,000 words (for students enrolled in ENGL714) or 3,000 words (for students enrolled in CWPG815) of Creative Nonfiction writing underpinned by **significant research**: typically in the genre of essay. Students will have the opportunity to Workshop early drafts of the Major Creative Work in the second half of the session. Criteria for Assessment include: the integration and identification of research within creative nonfiction; creativity of concept; demonstrated and/or implied understanding of genre and readership; use of technique, structure and language; evidence of development; and presentation.

On successful completion you will be able to:



- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.

## Delivery and Resources

### REQUIRED READING

- Perl, Sondra and Schwartz, Mimi. *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*. Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2014.
- Garner, Helen. *The First Stone: Some Questions on Sex and Power*. Chippendale, N.S.W: Picador, 1995.
- Further weekly readings of essays, articles and chapters are available from the unit's iLearn site and e-Reserve at the Library. Each week students will typically read two pieces of creative nonfiction and one 'craft' reading addressing the techniques, ethical concerns and professional standards of nonfiction writing. The reading list includes work by international authors such as Zadie Smith, George Saunders, Rebecca Solnit, Joan Didion, David Foster Wallace, Leslie Jamison, and Elliot Weinberger; and Australian essayists including Ashley Hay, Chloe Hooper, Kevin Brophy and Maria Tumarkin.

### RECOMMENDED (i.e. non-essential) READING

- Eisenhuth, Susie and McDonald, Wila (eds.). *The Writers' Reader: Understanding Journalism and Nonfiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hart, Jack. *Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction*. London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Hemley, Robin. *A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism and Travel*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Kidder, Tracy and Todd, Richard. *Good Prose: the Art of Nonfiction*. New York: Random House, 2013.
- Kramer, Mark and Call, Wendy (eds). *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*. New York: Penguin, 2007.
- Lazar, David (ed.). *Truth in Nonfiction: Essays*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008.
- Lopate, Philip. *To Show and to Tell: The Craft of Literary Nonfiction*. New York: Free Press, 2013.



- Ricketson, Matthew. *Telling True Stories: Navigating the Challenges of Writing Narrative Non-Fiction*. Sydney, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2014.
- Singer, Margot and Walker, Nicole (eds). *Bending Genre: Essays on Creative Nonfiction*. New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

External and Internal students must log in to the unit's iLearn site during Week 1. Students will be using the iLearn online site for communications each week. Students access reading materials, discussion boards, web links, each other's work and assignment marks through the unit's online web pages. Please familiarise yourself with the site in Week 1, paying particular attention to Announcements.

Students are expected to participate on a weekly basis, logging-in a number of times (for instance 3-4 times during each week) in order to listen to the lecture, to workshop, and to participate in the discussions of the readings. You can choose what time you do this each week—there is no 'live classroom' in this unit. The online week begins on Monday mornings and ends on Sunday night.

## 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)

**New Assessment Policy in effect from Session 2 2016** [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy\\_2016.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html). For more information visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new\\_assessment\\_policy\\_in\\_place\\_from\\_session\\_2/](http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new_assessment_policy_in_place_from_session_2/)

Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

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

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint\\_management/procedure.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.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/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](#).

## 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://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/information\\_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

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

## Graduate Capabilities

### PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Plan for Major Creative Work
- Major Creative Work

## PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Minor Creative Work
- Major Creative Work

## PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

## Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Minor Creative Work
- Major Creative Work

## PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Develop creative nonfiction writing skills in relation to concepts, topics, craft, technique and voice.
- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Advance skills in critiquing key issues relating to the creativity writing, publication or production of narrative nonfiction writing.

## Assessment tasks

- Participation
- Minor Creative Work
- Plan for Major Creative Work
- Major Creative Work

## PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Capacity to raise questions and solve problems in relation to the planning, revision, editing and rewriting of written creative works.
- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.

## Assessment tasks

- Participation

- Minor Creative Work
- Plan for Major Creative Work

## PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

### **Learning outcomes**

- Extend skills in individual reflection, revision, editing and textual analysis and communication through collaborative discussion of the creative work of student peers and own work.
- Develop research skills, including the use of libraries, journal and archival data-bases, visual records, site visits and/or interviews, and documentation of this research.
- Demonstrate knowledge of Australian writing and publishing contexts for this genre through reading, discussion and debate.

### **Assessment tasks**

- Participation
- Plan for Major Creative Work

## **Changes from Previous Offering**

The reading list, assessments and lectures have all been changed for the 2016 offering.