

## Forms of Nonfiction

“To reconstruct stories and scenes, nonfiction writers must conduct vigorous and responsible research. In fact, narrative requires more research than traditional reportage, for writers cannot simply tell what they learn and know; rather, they must show it.” Lee Gutkind

One of the backbones of nonfiction is research. However, research is not provided in nonfiction texts to verify a story (that is the stuff of history books and newspapers), it is a tool like characterization or dialogue that allows the writer to translate the truth that is in her head to the page. Many students do not often have a full understanding of what constitutes research and how research can be incorporated into nonfiction.

During this workshop, students will further explore the genre by reading work that incorporates research, data, and other sources. Students will learn research methods and resources, citations, and how to add quantitative data to texts in compelling ways. This class is designed to teach practical application of research.

We will also explore contemporary use of research in all forms of nonfiction, including memoir, lyric, multimodal, essay and hybrid texts. Students will ask how has the author incorporated research? Why do some forms demand more transparency and citation of sources than others? Is research always necessary? What types of documents, data, interviews and sources are available to the nonfiction writer? Particular focus will be on identifying how research is incorporated, and to what effect it is used, in each of the forms we study. We also will engage in a semester-long discussion about the role of research in nonfiction writing. Students will be encouraged to challenge their ideas about what classifies as research and to focus on learning by reading example texts.

We will examine works that use historical records, like *H is for Hawk*, police and court records like *In Cold Blood*, data and scientific information like the *Empathy Exams* as well as a number of shorter pieces that emphasize interviews, personal records (like diaries and photographs) and government and public records. For their analytical paper, students will choose a book and examine how and to what effect the author used research. Students will also write their own research-based work to present and discuss in class.

Discussion of published works and students writing will constitute the bulk of class time. The course will be approximately 2/3 literary study and 1/3 workshop.