



## **Year-Long Creative Nonfiction Project - Creative Nonfiction Important Dates**

### **Meeting dates**

(Calendar is subject to adjustment; specific class dates listed after the workshop description)

### **[Cohort Dates](#)**

### **YLWP Access Funds Application Window**

October 1-November 15, 2025

Loft Access Fund committee chooses top 2-4 candidates; TA ranks recipient and runner-up

### **Year-Long Writing Project Orientation**

Wednesday, January 20, 2026 | 6–7:30 p.m

Online/Zoom

### **Year-Long Writing Project Registration**

November 12 for friends; November 13 for general public

10:00 AM Central Time via website, phone, or email

### **Final Reading:**

Wednesday, January 13, 2027 | 7-8:30 PM

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Memoir is many things, but it should not be the stale, academic writing you've been taught in traditional composition courses. Contemporary memoirs often break genre boundaries by incorporating visual or poetic elements. Although not fiction, memoir can incorporate fictional aspects of storytelling by utilizing dialogue and narrative. Memoirs are true, but that *truth* should be universal, which means it strives to illuminate the human condition by finding the meaning in everyday interactions. You don't need to have lived an exciting life to write a beautiful memoir, but you will need to access an exciting (or new) perspective.

This class is for people at all stages of the memoir writing process. You may have a completed draft already, but you don't feel that it's ready to send to agents or publishers yet. Maybe you've

been wanting to start a memoir, but you don't know where to start. Maybe you're struggling with writer's block or low confidence. Regardless of where you are in the process, this class will meet you where you're at and help you to complete a draft of the memoir that you were meant to write. Everyone leads a life that is important enough to write about. Memoirs can be about a unique time in your life or specific incidents, but they may also explore themes that have recurred throughout a lifetime. Whatever story you're telling, this workshop will help you learn the elements of craft that make your story vivid, compelling, interesting, and beautiful.

Although we will focus on memoir, writers who work in other creative nonfiction genres such as personal essay, travelog, nature writing, or narrative journalism, are also welcome. Writers should always write what they are curious about, and our inspiration in this workshop will be that curiosity. What is it about your worldview that sees things in a unique way? How has your curiosity about your own experiences or the experiences of others shaped your life? And how can your own curiosity help others to deepen and explore theirs? The class will combine lecture, discussion, reading, writing exercises, peer workshop and suggestions for revision.

One year is plenty of time to write a working draft of your memoir, particularly within the framework of a supportive teaching mentor and cohort. Throughout the year, the workshop will look at the nuts and bolts of your memoir—the introduction, narrative arc, scene setting, dialogue, voice, revision, and editing—and you can expect to grow and evolve as a thinker and writer. Writing often happens in isolation, but community is also so important, and in addition to growing as thinkers and writers, class participants will build a supportive writing community.

We will also discuss the publishing industry, as well as strategies for finding agents and editors. We will focus on tools such as writing a strong query letter and identifying whether a press is right for you. In the process, you will also meet authors, publishers, and literary agents in order to help you develop the resources and relationships that you need to move forward in your writing career. At the end of the year, in addition to having a complete draft of your memoir, you will also have a completed query letter and pitch for agents and editors.

We will meet via Zoom for all cohort meetings for the entire year, so regardless of where you live, this class is accessible to you. Log-in information for your weekly meetings will be communicated via your confirmation email.

#### **CLASS VISITORS:**

Joy Tutela: Literary Agent at the David Black Agency

Marisa Siegel: Senior Acquisitions Editor for trade titles at Northwestern University Press, including the imprints Curbstone and TriQuarterly.

River Selby: Author of the memoir *Hotshot: A Life on Fire*

Zoe Bossière: Author of the memoir *Cactus Country: A Boyhood Memoir* and Managing Editor of *Brevity Magazine*.

Kat Saunders: Associate Editor at Kent State University Press

#### **REQUIRED READING\*:**

*Tell it Slant, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*, Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paolo

*Bluets*, Maggie Nelson

*Hotshot: A Life on Fire*, River Selby

*Cactus Country: A Boyhood Memoir*, Zoe Bossière

*Between Two Kingdoms: A Memoir of a Life Interrupted*, Suleika Jaouad

*The Part that Burns*, Jeannine Ouellette

*Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, Claudia Rankine

*You Could Make This Place Beautiful*, Maggie Smith

\*The Teaching Mentor will also distribute essays and supplementary readings throughout the year.

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

*The Situation and the Story*, Vivian Gornick

*Heavy*, Kiese Laymon

*Safekeeping*, Abigail Thomas

*Hunger*, Roxane Gay

*Blow Your House Down*, Gina Frangello

*In the Dream House*, Carmen Maria Machado

*How We Fight for Our Lives*, Saeed Jones