

The Loft's Memoir/Creative Nonfiction Writing Project 2021 Online Syllabus

Your nonfiction manuscript, from first word to market.

Teaching Mentor: **Nicole Helget**

Some memoirs span the length of a single day. Others cast a line into a year or two-long experience. Still others, such as classics like *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, begin with the storyteller's earliest memories in toddlerhood and then pick and choose moments all the way until the storyteller's 60th year. Creative Nonfiction can take the form of an essay collection, a deeply researched story, a blend of poetry and prose, or a cookbook in stories, for instance. No matter how much time or what shape your manuscript covers, I'm making a bet that with the support and encouragement from this class, you can get your book finished in one year.

That's the first lesson of this year-long course. The hundred other lessons that follow will take into account everything from how to begin to how to end, what to include and what to cut, if and how to include documents, modes of delivery, characterization, dialogue, setting, language, voice, purpose, idea, metaphor, conflict, arc, and tone, and when honesty is good and when honesty is going to get you in trouble, and what is honesty in memoir anyway? Is it emotional truth? Is a recreated memory from age five honest? Should you tell the reader when you're recreating memories? Or is the only honesty the strict, verifiable factual kind? The CNF/Memoir Writing Project will help you navigate these concerns and hopefully help you stave off writerly existential crises as you write your way toward your completed manuscript. Along the way, we'll also help you design a plan of action for its life after the book is done.

Maybe you've known for a while that you want to write about your unique life experiences or area of expertise, but you don't know how to start—or you keep hitting blocks when you sit down to write. Maybe you've got a draft, but parts of it just aren't working and you don't know how to fix them. Perhaps you're unsure about how to polish your manuscript and feel truly confident that it's ready to pursue publication.

You want to know that your book is the best you can make it. The Memoir/CNF Writing Project can help you.

We've heard from a number of students who've taken Loft classes that they're craving more intensive, personalized guidance and coaching on their writing projects. This program is designed to meet that demand.

It'll be a year of rigorous reading, focused writing, meticulous revising, and deep study of craft. You'll meet best selling authors, luminaries in publishing, distinguished booksellers and literary agents. But most importantly, you'll develop the resources and relationships to move ahead with a writing life once the course is finished. After 12 months, your manuscript will be close to submission-ready, and you'll be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to either pitch to agents, editors, and pursue traditional publication or look toward independent publishing sources.

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Your manuscript, from first word to last and on to market

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All meeting times listed throughout online writing project program information are in Minneapolis/Central/US time.

Winter/Spring Term 2021:

12 Thursdays: February 4–April 22, 2021; 6–9 p.m.

Summer Term 2021:

5 Thursdays: June 10 and 24; July 15 and 29; August 12, 6-9 p.m.

and 3 Saturdays: June 19, July 24, and August 28, from 2 p.m - 4 p.m.

Fall Term 2021

12 Thursdays: September 23–December 16; 6–9 p.m., no class November 25

And 4 one to one mentor meetings with Nicole throughout the year, scheduled individually, one of which must take place *before* the first meeting on February 4.

Final public reading on Thursday January 20, 2022, 7 p.m., on Zoom.

Final manuscripts due to Nicole on December 16, 2021; final one to one with Nicole must take place no later than February 28, 2022

Your Registration in The Creative Nonfiction/Memoir Writing Project Includes:

- 4 one-on-one online meetings/manuscript consultations with Nicole Helget focused on your individual memoir/CNF project, all via Zoom
 - o first (Winter 2021) based meeting is designed to glean the overall idea and goal of your manuscript and to discuss the Project's design and how Nicole Helget facilitates the Project and individual manuscript attention.
 - o second (late Spring/early Summer 2021) meeting occurs after Nicole Helget has read all of your manuscript-in-progress (up to 180 pgs) and is focused on your structure/plot/arc and strategies for how to proceed for the publishing goal and audience the author has in mind.
 - o third meeting occurs sometime in the fall, to ensure you're on the right track to finishing
 - o fourth meeting occurs after the Project ends, but no later than February 28, 2022) and you've turned in your completed manuscript (**up to 350 pgs**). After reading and editing your completed manuscript, Nicole will discuss with you the next steps toward your publishing desire.
- A communal writing and discussion space online (again, Zoom based), for the duration of the Memoir/CNF Writing Project.
 - o The online cohort meets for class and workshopping from 6-9pm Minneapolis/central time every Thursday for the Winter/Spring and Fall sessions.
 - o The online Zoom classroom is available to the cohorts throughout the summer, even while class is not in session, for editing and writing space.
- 32 cohort meetings throughout the year. These meetings will include

- beginning to advanced level lessons on craft
- Focused prompts designed for Memoir/Creative Nonfiction
 - Workshopping with oral and written feedback
- Visiting authors and publishing professionals, including agents and editors.
 - One to one consultations with your teaching mentor
 - Final manuscript consultation
- Optional additional Saturday meetings include a Grant Writing tutorial, an organization/structure tutorial, and a line editing tutorial