

ENG 383

LIVE LIT: THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

INSTRUCTOR

Kate Harding

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Office hours by appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS

Stielstra, Megan, and Andrew Reilly. *Briefly Knocked Unconscious by a Low-flying Duck: Stories from 2nd Story*. Ashford, CT: Elephant Rock, 2012.

Burns, Catherine, and George Dawes Green. *The Moth*. New York: Hachette, 2013.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sharing personal stories is a vital part of creating social change, but for creative writers, trying to send a message or teach a lesson can drain a story of its value as art and/or entertainment. The emerging nonfiction genre of “live lit”—short memoirs written for performance—is an excellent medium for exploring the personal and the political in creative work. How can we broach political subjects without coming across as excessively preachy or wonky? How can we draw broader social points out of our personal stories, without seeming “whiny” or narcissistic? What’s the difference between writing for the page and for a live audience? Through workshopping, class discussion, field trips, and performance practice, we’ll move toward balancing the persuasive power of a political speech with the delight of well-crafted essay.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on inquiry, communication, intercultural literacy, and citizenship.

By the end of the course, students will have produced two original pieces of creative writing for performance (communication), deepened their understanding of social justice and intersectionality (intercultural literacy), studied writing and performance styles of active live lit practitioners (inquiry), and participated in local writing community events (citizenship).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

- One short (5-minute) original live lit composition and performance. (20%)
- Three short (2 pp.) reader response pieces on readings of the student's choice. (20%)
- One short (2-3 pp.) reflective piece on attending a community literary event from the list below. (Students who attend more than one event may choose

- to write two of these and two reader responses, for a total of 30% of their grade.) (10%)
- One long (10 to 15-minute) original live lit composition and performance. (40%)
 - Attendance and participation (10%)

LATE PAPERS

What if you just got them in on time instead? Let's try that.

ATTENDANCE

Please come to class. You matter, and we'll miss you if you're gone.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF STRUGGLING WITH EITHER OF THE ABOVE

Please, and I cannot emphasize this enough, *talk to me*. You don't have to give me long excuses, just let me know how I can help you get back on track.

CLASS MEETING TIMES

M-Th 9:30-11, 1-3.

Friday, Feb 17 1-3

Fridays will otherwise be reserved for one-on-one conferences/rehearsals with Kate and free writing time. You are welcome to use the classroom to write in community with others. Performance practice should be arranged elsewhere, unless the classroom is empty.

COMMUNITY LITERARY EVENTS Please choose at least one to attend and write about.

Feb 14

7p.m. in Iowa City: **Junot Diaz** reading, 100 Phillips Hall (University of Iowa).

Feb 15

- 10:30a.m. in Iowa City: Q&A with **Junot Diaz** at Dey House (If you wish to attend this, let me know by Tuesday the 14th.)
- 11a.m. on the O.C.: reading of poetry by **Black American poets**
- 7:30p.m. in Cedar Rapids, at Parlor City Five Seasons Room: **Drop the Mic! Live Lit with Valerie Wetlaufer, Caleb Rainey, and 5 open mic spots** (doors at 7p.m.)
- 7:30p.m. at Palisades Café (Mount Vernon): Writer's Night (Go to listen, or email Joe Jennison, director@visitmvl.com, if you'd like to read!)

Feb 16 7:30p.m. in Black Box Theater, Armstrong Hall: "They Call Me Q" (performance by Qurrat Ann Kadwani)

Feb 17 6:30-9:30 p.m. in a private home in Cedar Rapids (address will be sent to you with purchase of ticket from [here](#)): The Living Room Series: Time Will Tell

Feb 20 4:30p.m. at the VEL House: Poetry for the Presidency release party! Join us for readings and refreshments.

Feb 21 6 p.m. at the Iowa City Public Library (123 S. Linn): Rainbow Room Write-In
Feb. 23 6 p.m. at the Cedar Rapids Public Library (450 5th Ave SE): Legacies: Black Men

Feb 27

- 4:30p.m. in Hall-Perrine: Distinguished Visiting Writer Kate Harding presents work from NASTY WOMEN (an anthology of essays forthcoming later this year). Followed by reception.
- 7 p.m. in Iowa City, John Darnielle at Prairie Lights Bookstore

Feb 28 5 p.m. at the Coralville Center for the Performing Arts: Meet the Iowa Arts Fellows (including performance/spoken word artist Akwi Nji)

Mar 1 7:30p.m. at Palisades Café (Mount Vernon): Writer's Night (Go to listen, or email Joe Jennison if you'd like to read!)

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I'm copying the school's policy you've seen a million times below. The only other thing you need to know is that I take this incredibly seriously. This is a class about 1) telling the truths of our own lives and 2) creating our own intellectual property. Plagiarism will result in failure.

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Welcome! I'm glad to have you in my class and look forward to working with you. Please notify me within three days if you know you need accommodations, and please feel free to talk to me at any time later in the block if you are struggling.

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

CONTENT NOTE

There is disturbing and potentially triggering content in some of the assigned readings, and more might very well come up in student writing. Please feel free to come to me with any concerns about the material. I cannot guarantee a safe space in the classroom, but I expect that we will all treat each other with respect and sensitivity, and keep things that happen in class confidential. Building trust is crucial to the work we'll be doing.

READINGS (and watchings and listenings) AND DUE DATES

WEEK ONE

Feb 13

Rachel Toliver and M. Sausun, "[Beyond "Craft for Craft's Sake": Nonfiction and Social Justice](#)"

Carrie Neill, "[Live Lit Blows through the Windy City](#)"
[Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political"](#)

Preface to *The Moth* (Adam Gopnik)

Introduction to *Briefly Knocked Unconscious*

Feb 14

Confession

Abby Frucht, "[Streams of Consciousness](#)"

Sandra Tsing-Loh, "[On Being a Bad Mother](#)"

George Orwell, "[Shooting an Elephant](#)"

Deb R. Lewis, "Why I Hate Strawberries" (in *Briefly Knocked Unconscious*)

Feb 15

Comedy

Dan Savage, "[Not That Kind of Gay](#)"

Samantha Irby, "[My Mother, My Daughter](#)"

Kimya Dawson, "[Mariah and the Haunted Forest](#)"

Vivienne Anderson, "[I Don't Have To](#)"

Feb 16

Connection

Suzanne Barakat, "[Deah, Yusor, and Razan](#)"

Charles Upshaw, "[Jesse Owens, Michael Phelps, and Me](#)"

CP Chang, "Tribes" (in *Briefly Knocked Unconscious*)

Feb 17 - DRAFT 1 of 5-MINUTE PIECE DUE

Workshop readings

WEEK TWO

Feb 20 - FIRST TWO READER RESPONSES DUE

Workshop readings

Feb 21
Workshop readings

Feb 22
Andrew Solomon "Notes on an Exorcism" (in *The Moth* and [performed here](#))
Megan Stielstra, [Channel B](#) (text and audio)

Feb 23
Khanisha Foster, "The Kids and the King" (in *Briefly Knocked Unconscious* and [performed here](#).)
Reading TBA

Feb 24
One on one conferences/Community Writing Day

WEEK THREE

Feb 27 – FINAL PERFORMANCE PIECE (10-15 mins.) DRAFT DUE
PERFORMANCES OF 5-MINUTE PIECE
Workshop readings

Feb 28
Workshop readings

Mar 1
Darryl McDaniels, "Angel" (in *The Moth* and [performed here](#))
Ellie Lee, "A Kind of Wisdom" (in *The Moth* and [performed here](#))

Mar 2
Stephanie Summerville, "Life Support" (in *The Moth* and [performed here](#))
Lott Hill, "Crazy for You" (in *Briefly Knocked Unconscious* and [performed here](#))

Mar 3 –COMMUNITY EVENT REFLECTION AND LAST READER RESPONSE DUE
One-on-one rehearsals of final piece/Community Writing Day

WEEK FOUR

Mar 6
Final performances

Mar 7
Final performances

Mar 8
Community Writing Time

