

WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER:
Turning Research into Real Life through Creative Nonfiction
Spring 2018, Course HSD 598, class #30179

Instructor: Lee Gutkind

Researchers, policy wonks, grant writers, program managers, aspiring politicians, decision makers and writers of all ages: Everyone needs to know how to find and write a strong, effective, true story. That's what **WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER** is all about, helping students and professionals transform research, experiences and ideas, into compelling nonfiction narratives so that readers are both informed and entertained.

In this semester-long workshop, Gutkind will proceed, step-by-step, through the entire writing true stories process, from finding the story to recreating scenes and building a scene-by-scene structure that is informative and cogent. Participants will learn how to read with a writer's eye and recognize and utilize structural patterns. Literary techniques like dialog, flash descriptions, inner point of view, and the art of embedding information in story will be explained, illustrated, and practiced.

The skills and techniques developed in this class will be applicable to all forms of nonfiction—from long-form journalism, op-ed pieces, and speechwriting to book proposals, grant applications, and white papers.

The course will begin with idea development—what you want to write about, the audience you are targeting and the true story you want to tell--and your reasons for writing. There will be an overview of the creative nonfiction genre, background, history, etc. and, most importantly, of the craft—how to do what it is you will be doing for the entire semester. Writing process will also be discussed—the importance of a regular schedule.

First Assignment: A 500-word abstract of what you will be writing and your mission—the impact you want to make. That includes: Your subject and theme or focus; who you will be interviewing or “hanging around” with; what sort of research you will be conducting or have completed; what your overall story will be; or, if you don't know your story, then how to find it; why the subject is important; what the reader will learn in the end.

You will begin to write scenes—learning to develop a balanced mix of style and substance, information and action, so that readers are engaged while learning. Gradually, your scenes will come together in an overall story structure—a narrative arc. Halfway through the course, you will submit a first draft of approximately 5,000 words. The remainder of the class will focus on revision—that long road from rough cut to polished finished piece.

WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER will be a “workshop,” with class discussion driving the learning and writing experience. Participants will read each other's work and offer polite and honest responses. Gutkind will lead and monitor those discussions and provide timely lectures, adding information and insight along the way.

Published narratives will be deconstructed so that you will recognize how others bring together complicated subjects with multiple characters and intertwined ideas. The general legal, moral, ethical

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challenges and quandaries that come to mind when fact is transformed into nonfiction narrative will be discussed. There will be networking opportunities with editors, including *Issues in Science and Technology*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Slate*, and others.

WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER is designed for busy individuals, with high intensity leading to high productivity. The class meets every other week, Thursday and Friday evenings, 6:00-9:00 PM at the new Arizona State University Washington DC Center (Or, via Vidyo, from 4:00-7:00 PM at the Tempe campus), from January 11 through April 27, 2018.

For more course information about **WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER**: please contact Brenda Trinidad, teaching assistant, (brenda.trinidad@asu.edu) or Lee Gutkind (lee.gutkind@asu.edu)

Note: Graduate-level class credits can be applied to a graduate degree at Arizona State University or transferred elsewhere.

To Register: As an ASU student simply register through my.asu.edu .

If you are not currently an ASU student, you must first become a non-degree seeking graduate student: The process is quick and easy. Go to <https://students.asu.edu/graduate/nondegree>. This web page links to the ASU Graduate Admissions application.

During the application process you will need to choose the following options:

- Non-degree Graduate Student
- College/School = Graduate School
- Location = ASU–Tempe.

This is not an online course; do not choose ASU Online.

In approximately 48 hours, you will receive an email confirming your non-degree status admission.

You can then log into your newly established account (my.asu.edu). At the bottom of the My Classes box, click on “Registration”, “Add”, then search for HSD 598 class # 30179. That will add **WRITING TRUE STORIES THAT MATTER** to your “cart” and finish the registration process.

ABOUT LEE GUTKIND

Recognized by Vanity Fair as “the Godfather behind creative nonfiction,” Gutkind is the author or editor of more than 35 books and founder and editor of *Creative Nonfiction*, the first and largest literary magazine to publish narrative nonfiction exclusively. He is Distinguished Writer-in-Residence in

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the Consortium for Science, Policy & Outcomes at Arizona State University and a professor in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society.

Gutkind has lectured to audiences around the world—from China to the Czech Republic, from Australia to Africa to Egypt. He has presented “Writing True Stories” workshops in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club and the National Academy of Sciences. He has appeared on many national radio and television shows, including *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* (Comedy Central), *Good Morning America*, National Public Radio’s *Talk of the Nation* and *All Things Considered*, as well as *BBC World*.