This semester, our nonfiction class will study the art and craft of nonfiction, both as readers and as writers. The workshop is our primary focus in this class, and to that end students will write at least 40 pages of nonfiction, at least two pieces of which will be offered for review in workshop. No more than 20-25 pages per workshop, please. One of the essays must be significantly revised or expanded by the end of the course. Present all work in standard format, with a title and page numbers. I require a single-side reading copy, but you can make double-sided copies for the group.

Our workshop format is that of a community of writers working to give the most useful feedback on the fundamental issues of memory, meaning and method in writing from the first-person point of view. The focus of the workshop will be to assist in revision with an eye toward creating publishable works. Writers scheduled for workshop will provide sufficient copies of their work one week in advance. There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this rule, so plan ahead. Readers will provide two signed copies of their written comments— one page minimum length—at the time of the workshop. The writer will keep one copy and I will keep the other. Constructive criticism of the story, its diction, organization, development and voice are welcome, but individuals are responsible for fully editing and proofreading work so we are not forced to sideline issues of content and style for those of grammar, syntax and spelling.

**In addition to writing requirements, you are required to compile a list of four nonfiction books you plan to read this semester, and submit your list for approval during our second class meeting (Sept. 8). In that class, I will ask you to provide an explanation or defense of this reading list—what you hope to study, why these books are good examples of that craft, technique, element, topic, subgenre, etc. I encourage you to design a list that ‘speaks’ to current or future projects or adds to your study of a particular author or topic or writing form. See me if you’re looking for ideas. An annotated bibliography of these works will be part of the portfolio you submit at the end of the semester.

Attendance: There is no way to make up a missed class. More than two absences and you may be asked to drop the course. Your attendance may affect your grade. Grades: At our final class meeting, I’ll collect your portfolios, which shall include your revised essay, bibliography—and any new materials you submit to meet the page requirement. Attendance issues aside, high grades will be earned by all students who complete reading and writing assignments on time; who pull their weight in workshop with respectful, honest, well-reasoned written and spoken comments; whose contribution to classroom discussions shows thought and preparation; and who turn in a final portfolio that is complete and reflects a mastery of advanced nonfiction writing, craft and style.

Plagiarism is defined in the UM Student Conduct Code as representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own. In this course it will result in a failing grade. Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Please come and see me. Be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator. As the semester progresses, we, as a class, may agree to alter or amend this syllabus/schedule to suit our changing needs.