

Creative Research Writing: Between Fact, Fiction, and Personal Truths

with Farida Gohar

My arrival at creative research writing is informed by two observations:

1. There is an assumed distinction between academic research and writing practices and personal, creative ones.
2. Academic research and writing practices are considerably impaired when divorced from personal, creative ones.

To attempt to reconcile both ‘types’ of writing, of approaching our work and the page, is to be faced with the dual demands of critical thinking and our imaginations. This, to me, is an incredibly exciting beckoning and if taken seriously, can be immensely expansive and not least of all, fun.

How would our articulation of our research findings be impacted if we approached it as writers of creative non-fiction rather than academics? How might an eye to poetry, to figurative language, rhythm, and musicality inform the kind of observations we make and how we interpret them? How can our chosen transcription methods alter our perception of the same interview? What would happen if we inserted our own experiential history and emotions into our academic writing, considered them equally profound and worked with them seriously?

These are some of the questions that we will attempt to address collectively by experimenting with different creative writing tools and forms and seeing how they can be configured within our research process and writing.

After the first few introductory/induction sessions where we learn more about the ethos of creative research writing and decide on mini research projects, the course is structured in pairs of discussion based seminars and writing workshops.

Course Flow

This is only a proposed course flow, prone to restructuring, additions, and subtractions depending on our pace and preferences as expressed during our sessions.

Week 1: Introductions: interests, impressions, potential research projects + what is and why partake in creative research writing.

Week 2: Opening ourselves up to the possibilities of creative research writing

- Le Guin, U. K. (2004). *The Wave in the Mind*. Shambhala.
- BARD Studio. (n.d.). Notes on the Semi-fictional Form.
- Shetty, P., Gupte, R., & Khanolkar, P. (n.d.). *Gurgaon Glossaries*. Crit Studio.

Week 3: Creative non-fiction, prose, & figurative language

- Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures. *Basic Books, Inc., Publishers*.
- Gutkind, Lee. (2006). Creative Nonfiction: A Movement, Not a Moment. *Creative Nonfiction*, 29, 6-18.
- حسان الناصر. (18 مارس، 2026). لاجئون في هواء رطب. مدى مصر.
<https://mada38.appspot.com/www.madamasr.com/2026/03/18/feature/%d8%b3%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%a9/%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%a6%d9%88%d9%86-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%87%d9%88%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%b1%d8%b7%d8%a8>

Week 4: Writing workshop #1: Creative non-fiction, prose, & figurative language

Week 5: Ethnographic poetry

- Pandian, A., & McLean, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing*. Duke University Press.
<https://doi-org.libproxy.aucegypt.edu/10.2307/j.ctv1168bd2>

Week 6: Writing workshop #2: Ethnographic poetry

Week 7: Transcription

- Lichterman, P. (2015). Interpretive reflexivity in ethnography. *Ethnography*, 18(1).
- Skukauskaite, A. (2012). Transparency in Transcribing: Making Visible Theoretical Bases Impacting Knowledge Construction from Open-Ended Interview Records. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13.

Week 8: Writing workshop #3: Transcription

[Week 9: Autobiographical writing](#)

- Shands, K. W., Mikrut, G. G., Pattanaik, D. R., & Ferreira-Meyers, K. (Eds.). (2015). *Introduction to Writing the Self: Essays on Autobiography and Autofiction*. English Studies 5.
- Rankine, C. (2004). *Don't Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric*. Graywolf Press.
- Chee, A. (2018). *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*. Mariner Books.

[Week 10: Writing workshop #4: Autobiographical writing](#)

[Week 11: Photo essays](#)

- Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Barthes, R. (1980). *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Hill and Wang.

[Week 12: Writing workshop #5: Photo essays](#)