

Art of Environment & Science Writing Workshop in 5 parts

Rough Schedule:

MARCH 3: Week one

Introductions: Instructor & Students

TOPIC: Introduction to environmental writing—basic principles to be covered in class. Why being able to describe the environment matters.

We'll consider what is meant by 'the environment'. And start with what we see.

ACTIVITY: Describing Nature. We'll start with

OBSERVATION: The First Sense.

A quick exercise during the break: What do you see within 15 minutes of the classroom?

We'll take a few examples from students, and consider how one might describe them. Where is the 'story' in that observation.

Preparation for first writing assignment: Describe some element of the 'environment' near where you live, or your home (ie, where you've been living before coming to Berkeley), to start with, 2-3 paragraphs.

Preparation for 'Description of the Day'. Each student over the course of the five weeks will be asked to present a description they've read, and why it resonates, what we learn from it... and discuss in class (to be rotated among students, several each week, so that by the end everyone would have had the chance to present).

MARCH 10: Week two.

TOPIC: The Question & The Lede.

Instructor offers a few examples from non-fiction and fiction writers. And then will introduce the importance of a question to every good story. How a well-framed question can send you on a research/reporting journey into explaining the phenomenon you've just described.

And we will consider the lede---the way to draw a reader into the story or description. Capture our attention.

In class, we will ask several students to share their description (everyone will have a chance to read to the class over the coming four weeks). Instructor shares example of nature description by a fiction writer and a non-fiction writer.

ACTIVITY: We'll be selecting one or another student to volunteer to offer their description of the day (2-3 students per class, depending on total number of students). Description of the day: Tell us what you read, why it works to evoke an aspect of nature.

Homework: In preparation for final writing assignment, probe into the science that explains whatever phenomenon you described in your writing in week 1. Students will be asked to write a short description of the science that helps explain what it is they observed in the previous week.

MARCH 17: Week three.

TOPIC: Guest speaker, [Cary Moskowitz](#), Director of Writing at Duke University, an expert in teaching how to write on complicated academic and scientific subjects. (first half of class)

ACTIVITY (second half of class): Finding the Drama in the Science. We'll discuss how the process of scientific discovery is loaded with dramatic potential, and how to use that in your narratives.

MARCH 24: Week four.

TOPIC: THE METHOD. We'll present and discuss the scientific method and the quality it shares and does not share with the journalistic method for gathering information and detail for your writing.

Description of the Day.

ACTIVITY: Students come in with readings they like of good writers about science/environment.

We'll discuss readings (to be assigned, and the ways they reflect the points we've established earlier in the workshop).

And we'll finalize your final writing project...to be worked on over the spring break.

MARCH 31: Spring Break.

This is a week in which you can work on your writing assignment for the workshop.

APRIL 7: Final day of class.

Students share each others' work and constructive criticisms from Instructor and fellow students.

We'll discuss: How to apply this critical eye to your own work going forward in your studies and in your career.

In order to take advantage of this session, students will be asked to turn in their final stories at least two days in advance of the final class, on April 5, which will enable other students – and the Instructor—to read and absorb the writing.

We'll focus this session on constructive criticism and discussion of each student's work.