CREATIVE NONFICTION WRITING (MFA)

MFA 615: Mentorship Lab I (3 credits)
Each student works individually and in a small group with a faculty mentor who guides him or her through the writing process. Via the Internet, for each of the subsequent four months, the student will submit to his or her mentor online written assignments designed to improve writing and critical thinking skills related to producing small written pieces to book-length projects. The mentor will also assign published online reading materials which students will critically assess. The mentor will provide feedback and be available to mentees by e-mail, telephone or by Skype to answer questions, work on problems, and give advice on submitting work for publication.

MFA 620: Mentorship Lab II (3 credits)
Each student works individually and in a small group with a faculty mentor who guides him or her through the writing process. Via the Internet, for each of the subsequent four months, the student will submit to his or her mentor online written assignments designed to improve writing and critical thinking skills related to producing small written pieces to book-length projects. The mentor will also assign published online reading materials which students will critically assess. The mentor will provide feedback and be available to mentees by e-mail, telephone or by Skype to answer questions, work on problems, and give advice on submitting work for publication.

MFA 625: Mentorship Lab III (3 credits)
These introductory seminar courses are aimed at intensive study of and experimentation with the forms and techniques of nonfiction. Reading assignments will be delivered online and original work might include a braided essay, a memory told in second person, or an in-depth interview. Discussion of reading assignments will occur online via the Bay Path College online educational delivery system.

MFA 627: Introduction to Narrative Medicine (3 credits)
None of us escapes this life without facing illness or trauma or loving someone who is facing physical illness or trauma, nor are any of us unaffected by societal issues including crime, racial strife and unemployment. Reading and writing about these experiences (ours and others') can provide us a framework for a more profound understanding of what it means to be human. In this 16-week fall course, students will read and discuss contemporary writers who explore the experience of illness or trauma from their own perspectives, plus those of patients, caregivers, loved ones, and observers. Also on the reading list will be one book-length narrative and a craft book. Among the writers and poets to be studied: Tanya Maria Barrientos, Leanna James Blackwell, Melanie Brooks, Susan Deer Cloud, Ted Deppe, Andre Dubus III, Miriam Engleberg, Terry Galloway, Jeffrey Harrison, Richard Hoffman, Ann Hood, Perri Klass, Marianne Leone, John McGahern, Kyoko Mori, Dinty Moore, Nuala O'Connor, Leonard Pitts, Susan Seligson, Jerald Walker, and Virginia Woof. With the help of weekly writing exercises and prompts, students will engage in the process of writing a narrative of an experience with illness or trauma (1,500 to 2,000 words) and have the opportunity to receive feedback from their instructor and classmates. We will meet regularly via Zoom to discuss course topics, share writing, and further community. Together, we will seek answers to the following questions: • What is the value of writing about illness and trauma? • What do stories of illness and trauma have to offer the world? • What elements of craft and style can help us unravel the complexity of these experiences and engage with them meaningfully and authentically?

MFA 628: Medical/Trauma Narratives and Social Justice (3 credits)
People of color, women, poor people, and immigrants and undocumented residents, in addition to other marginalized groups, often endure various forms of trauma associated with their status. Through the reading and study of poems, stories, and essays, this eight-week summer course will examine some of the following challenges they routinely face: 1. For immigrants and undocumented residents, trauma experienced in their countries of origin, as well as difficulties faced in adjusting to their new homes, can cause untreated Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. 2. Limited access to affordable, ongoing preventive health care often results in manageable chronic illnesses going untreated and becoming life-threatening. 3. A high incidence of incarceration among marginalized groups, and the treatment and conditions experienced in prisons, can be traumatic for incarcerated individuals and their families. 4. The inability or unwillingness of some caregivers and service organizations to overcome cultural barriers can make it difficult to provide effective support. This is complicated by that fact that individuals in need often lack experience advocating on their own behalf. In addition, some might not be aware of resources that exist to help deal with trauma, or for various reasons choose not to approach organizations or institutions that might offer assistance. 5. Women of all backgrounds have throughout history been subjected to exploitation and abuse. Only in recent years has the "Me Too" movement prompted a serious, society-wide examination of this issue. 6. Members of the LGBTQ community can experience profound trauma from legal persecution, societal prejudice, and often toxic family dynamics. The course will feature assigned readings of poets and writers of fiction and nonfiction prose who have addressed some of these complicated issues, such as Julia Alvarez, Lesley Nneka Arimah, James Baldwin, Tiana Clark, Rita Dove, Martin Espada, Claudia Rankine, Natasha Trethewey, and Lesley Ocean Vuong. Each week, guided by writing prompts, students will produce 1,500- to 2,000-word essays that explore issues raised by the readings. In addition to developing tools for critical analysis, students will have opportunities on Zoom to "workshop" each other's writing and develop a skill fundamental for every serious writer—the ability to give and receive constructive criticism.

MFA 630: Writing Contemporary Womens Stories (3 credits)
Women's stories are rife with the truth and grit and beauty of real life. Writing personal narrative, such as memoir and personal essays, or writing pieces on a remarkable woman's story, can be a transformative act. The writing returns us to our true selves and reminds us of our unique voice and creative vision. Students will craft real-life experiences into essays, or the stories of others into long-form journalism. Writing by authors including Jo Ann Beard, Barbara Ehrenreich, Sharline Chiang, Cheryl Strayed, Marie Myung-Ok Lee, and Faith Adiele will be studied, discussed online and written about as inspiration, and as stepping stones to the latest contributions to this category of nonfiction.

MFA 632: Nature and Environmental Writing (3 credits)
Through poetry, fiction, and nonfiction we will explore how writers from diverse cultural backgrounds have imagined a relationship to nature. Within these literary contexts, we will study the intersections of nature and culture in a variety of landscapes—wilderness or the "wild," pastoral/antipastoral, urban and suburban—paying special attention to writing techniques, styles, and strategies authors use to create compelling narrative portraits of the natural world and our relationship with the world in which we live. Through a series of writing assignments, we will generate essays and poems on the theme of nature, the cultural messages about nature we received growing up, and the role nature plays in our lives today.

MFA 636: Travel and Food Writing for Publication (3 credits)
In Travel and Food Writing for Publication, we'll explore writing about food and travel for magazines, newspapers, guidebooks, cookbooks, literary journals, and blogs, and take a look at visual storytelling through social media such as Instagram and vlogging. We'll delve into discovering a place through its culinary backdrop and examine how food writing goes beyond what's on the fork. We'll dissect what "travel literature" includes—from guidebook to memoir. Using a variety of readings (literary essays, feature articles, blog posts, cookbook reviews, and more), we'll examine what writers do in preparation for original work geared towards publication, whether it's in print, online or is DIY. We'll focus on the craft of writing—from brainstorming ideas, to drafting/revising, workshopping and refining—as well as explore the business of writing. We'll discuss our fears, expectations and goals of publishing, how to pitch (the do's and don'ts), and what to know when going from the page to print. Short weekly writing assignments will culminate in a revision assignment (1,500 words) and we'll end the semester with a long article/essay assignment geared towards publication (2,500 words). Peer review and comments are essential to this course and will be centered around bi-weekly Canvas forums.

MFA 637: Reading as a Writer (3 credits)
This course exists to address, foster, and expand the fundamental and necessary connection between a vibrant, rigorous reading life and the act of creative writing. While all writers must read and read constantly, deeply, and broadly, writers enrolled in an MFA program must also read in a very particular way: they must read as writers. They must be encouraged and guided to become seriously engaged with quality published works —and to participate in discussions and formulate responses to those works. This course recognizes and champions the truth that graduate student writers (indeed all writers!), must read not just within their chosen genre and form, but from the wider range of literary works. Hence, this course will include not only texts of CNF (memoir, personal essay, literary journalism, and other forms), but also fiction (novel, novella, short story), and poetry. The intention is to expose student writers to the rich panoply of written expression across the lines of genre, form, style, and other labels often imposed by the academy, media, and the marketplace. The reading—and ensuing discussions, assignments, annotations, and responses—are all meant to help students grow substantially as writers, as observers and analysts of the craft, and as discerning, intellectually curious readers/writers throughout their future writing lives.

MFA 638: Reading and Writing about Culture, Race, and Identity (3 credits)
In this course, students read essays, articles, and memoirs by contemporary writers exploring the topic of culture in America. How do we define culture ? How does race, language, religion, gender, class, country of origin, and sexual orientation influence our experience of the world we live in? How do we define who we are and where we belong? How do we write about it? In our eight weeks together, we will read, discuss, and write about these questions. We will focus on the multiple ways writers help define and express the concepts of culture and how we both contribute to it and are shaped by it. We will look at issues of privilege and of oppression, of discrimination and celebration. We will pay special attention to literary craft and these strategies writers use to bring us into their lived experience. And we will write our own stories, developing narratives that expand our understanding of self-identity and the identity of others.

MFA 640: Womens Spiritual Writing through the Ages (3 credits)
Students will trace the legacy of the spiritual/devotional writing of women through the ages, from Greek poet Sappho through Sufi and Hindu writers, Christian mystics of the Middle Ages, Jewish writers of their time, to contemporary writers including Anne Lamott and Joan Chittister. Native American women's voices, as well as Mexican (Juana Inés de la Cruz), Pagan, Latina and Buddhist (Joan Halifax) will be explored. Eco-Spiritualists such as Alice Walker and also Marian Wright Edelman could be included. Students will write responses to the critical spiritual questions affecting women posed by their instructor

MFA 660: Creative Nonfiction Writing I Form and Theory (3 credits)
These introductory seminar courses are aimed at intensive study of and experimentation with the forms and techniques of nonfiction. Reading assignments will be delivered online and original work might include a braided essay, a memory told in second person, an in-depth interview. Discussion of reading assignments will occur online via the Bay Path University online educational delivery system.

MFA 661: Creative Nonfiction Writing II Form and Theory (3 credits)
These introductory seminar courses are aimed at intensive study of and experimentation with the forms and techniques of nonfiction. Reading assignments will be delivered online and original work might include a braided essay, a memory told in second person, an in-depth interview. Discussion of reading assignments will occur online via the Bay Path University online educational delivery system.

MFA 666: Generational Histories Writing About Family (3 credits)
This course focuses on research and writing about family history through the generations. We will focus on the numerous sources of family stories: oral histories, diaries and letters, newspaper articles and announcements, videos and photographs, interviews, census records, legal documents, and archival materials. Through readings and discussion of the literature of ancestry –family memoirs, essays, and histories—we will gain an understanding of writing as a tool for biographical exploration and a means of artistically interpreting our own histories. We will also conduct our own ancestral research and interviews and write three biographical essays, each exploring a different aspect of family history. Throughout the course, we will focus on the essentials of good biographical writing: attention to the telling detail; a balance between technical objectivity and emotional subjectivity; an awareness of the "so what" question, or why this story is important to others and not just the writer; insight into the human struggles of the individuals being described; a perspective that allows for moral complexity (as opposed to villain/victim narratives); an understanding of the difference between "foreground" and "background" information; the judicious use of humor (when appropriate), metaphorical language, and emotional speculation; and clear and vivid prose. We will also focus on the ethics involved in biographical writing about others and the ways in which different writers have resolved or negotiated this issue. Writers we will study and discuss include James McBride, Mary Karr, Geoffrey Woolf, Maxine Hong Kingston, Marjane Satrapi, Augusten Burroughs, David Sedaris, Mary Gordon, and Martin Sixsmith. At the conclusion of the course, students will know how to initiate a family research project, what distinguishes a literary family biography from a straightforward historical account, how to choose a focus and develop a theme when writing about personal material, and how to gauge whether an essay has the potential to be developed into a book-length work.

MFA 668: Creative Writing Field Seminar (3 credits)
Travel with faculty and other students to Ireland and generate creative work about the experience. A ten-day travel experience, the seminar will include daily workshops, lectures, readings, and ample time for immersion in the local culture. Enrollment will be limited to 20 participants. Costs of travel and lodging are not included in the tuition fee for this course.

MFA 675: Learning to Teach (3 credits)
The course will prepare students to confidently step to the head of a creative writing classroom (online or face-to-face) and positively impact their own students Through online instruction, students will become skilled in creating course syllabi, in selecting appropriate reading material (especially that of a digital nature), structuring class time, and leading face-to-face as well as cyber workshops. They will also learn to effectively respond to all types of classroom challenges as they prepare digital responses to the important and relevant teaching practices provided by the instructor.

MFA 676: Teaching to Learn (3 credits)
Building upon the learning from MFA 670, students will apply their skills in a semester-long practicum during which they gain hands on experience (in both face-to-face and digital settings) in teaching creative writing. Students will have the option of co-teaching a college-level creative writing course in the undergraduate program at Bay Path University. An alternative would be offering a semester long writing workshop to an underserved population, including new citizens, and residents of shelters, housing projects, nursing homes and hospitals.
Prerequisite: MFA 670

MFA 680: Introduction to Publishing (3 credits)
This course will demystify the journey to publication through examinations of the steps involved on the writer's behalf; the structure of the publishing industry; the parts played by agent, editor, publicist, sales representatives and other key figures; and the all-important steps an author can take after publication to give a book the best opportunity for success. Information about online publishing as well as digital self-publication techniques will be offered through the Bay Path University online educational delivery system. Cyber visits by agents and editors will also be included.

MFA 681: Immersion in Publishing (3 credits)
Students will complete a 70-hour publishing internship (working remotely or on-location) at a literary magazine, small press, independent bookstore, or other publishing setting. They will document their internship experience via blog posts, and share their learning with classmates via audio/video presentations. At the end of the semester, students will submit a reflective essay or edited Q&A based on their internship experience. Alongside their internship experience, students will follow and report on current publishing new stories, and continue the work they began in MFA 680 on their Writer's Path projects.
Prerequisite: MFA 680

MFA 682: Capstone I: Best Practices for Writing about Illness & Recovery (3 credits)
This 16-week fall course will prepare students for their field internship, in which they set up and lead a writing workshop in a non-literary or non-academic setting such as a senior-care center, a veterans' support program, a cancer recovery group or other location. The class will offer best practices in planning, leading, and evaluating writing workshops with organizations and employers whose agencies and businesses serve specific diagnostic or demographic groups.

MFA 690: Thesis I (3 credits)
This two-course sequence represents the culmination of a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book length piece of creative nonfiction. Via the internet, students will further develop the craft of shaping a book-length nonfiction project by working individually with a faculty mentor, and by discussing their shared writing experiences with student peers. Though each student will actively work toward the creation of new pieces of nonfiction, and toward the revision of individual works, the primary emphasis of the course will be on developing the student's ability to shape a book-length collection of writing into an aesthetic construct that is at once informed by, and larger than, the sum of its parts. Regular online workshops will be provided for peer feedback and critique.

MFA 691: Thesis II (3 credits)
This two-course sequence represents the culmination of a program-long process of working toward the completion of a book length piece of creative nonfiction. Via the internet, students will further develop the craft of shaping a book-length nonfiction project by working individually with a faculty mentor, and by discussing their shared writing experiences with student peers. Though each student will actively work toward the creation of new pieces of nonfiction, and toward the revision of individual works, the primary emphasis of the course will be on developing the student's ability to shape a book-length collection of writing into an aesthetic construct that is at once informed by, and larger than, the sum of its parts. Regular online workshops will be provided for peer feedback and critique.