

# Course Descriptions for Summer 2008

## English 400 Topics in Literature

David Stevenson

### Section 1

#### **Topic: Creative Nonfiction: Writing, Exaggeration, Lying, and Hoaxes**

**Aim:** This course will be a study in the genre of creative nonfiction and its slippery relation to “truth.” We will begin with Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*, described as the first nonfiction novel and watch a film version of the text, as well as two films about the making of the text. The largest, most ambitious questions our readings and discussions will address are: *can we know “truth”?* and *does it matter whether we can or not?*

**Teaching method:** Discussion/lecture. There will be a significant amount of class time devoted to watching film.

#### **Tentative Reading List:** (subject to change)

Capote, *In Cold Blood*

Frey, *A Million Little Pieces*

Irving, *The Hoax*

Leroy, *The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things*

Orlean, *The Orchid Thief*

Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*

#### **Films** (tentative/subject to change)

*In Cold Blood*

*Capote*

*Infamous*

*Adaptation*

*Storytelling*

*The Hoax*

**Assignments:** Regular in-class writing on the day’s assigned reading. One short informal paper. Final exam.

**Pre-requisite:** English 299 with a grade of C or better; consent of instructor. Students taking the course for graduate credit will do supplementary critical reading.