

# How to Write Short Personal Essays for Magazines & Newspapers

July 24<sup>th</sup> to September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022



**Instructor**  
Melissa Hart

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**Weekly Zoom Meeting**  
Tuesdays, 10 AM PST

## Course Description

This asynchronous course will give you all the tools you need to start writing short personal essays for magazines and newspapers, as well as blogs, radio programs, and newsletters. We'll cover topic brainstorming, scene setting, essay structures, ethical issues, revision strategies, and the editorial submission process, as well as what to do when an editor says, "Yes, we'd love to publish your essay!"

## What does asynchronous mean?

You'll receive a lesson along with links to published essays and bonus material every Sunday. You get to work on that week's lesson on your own schedule, contribute to the Google Classroom discussion forums at your leisure, and join us for the weekly Zoom meeting in person . . . or not!

## Goals

You'll come up with a dozen ideas for short personal essays, then choose one on which to focus while in this class. You'll write a rough draft and a second draft, receiving Melissa Hart's feedback on both. You'll compose a cover letter and a list of publications suitable for your work. As well, you'll read a wide variety of short personal essays from diverse writers in diverse settings.

## Suggested Texts

- [\*Crafting the Personal Essay: A Guide for Writing and Publishing Creative Nonfiction\*](#)
- Short personal essays from a wide variety of publications, emailed weekly

Week	Date	Topic
1	July 24th	What is a personal essay? Who publishes them? What are editors looking for?
2	July 31 <sup>st</sup>	The structure of a personal essay. Scenes and that crucial first paragraph.
3	Aug. 7th	Characterization and dialogue in short personal essays.
4	Aug. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Setting and sensory details in short personal essays.
5	Aug. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Narrative/character trajectory and plot in short personal essays
6	Aug. 28th	Theme and thesis, ethics, and revision of short personal essays
7	Sept. 4th	Where to find editors; how to submit essays to editors; lyrical essays.
8	Sept. 11th	Acceptance, rejection, promotion, platform building & submission trackers.

## Important Dates

### Zoom Meetings (Optional)

Come hang out for an hour once a week. Bring your coffee and your questions and your cat, and let's chat!

### 10-11 AM Pacific Time

July 26th

August 2<sup>nd</sup>

August 9<sup>th</sup>

August 16<sup>th</sup>

August 23<sup>rd</sup>

August 30<sup>th</sup>

September 6<sup>th</sup>

September 13<sup>th</sup>



### Short Personal Essay Due Dates

Rough draft (400-1,200 words) August 21st

Cover Letter (1 page max) September 11<sup>th</sup>

Second draft (400-1,200 words) September 18th



### About Your Instructor

Melissa Hart is Contributing Editor at *The Writer Magazine*, and author of seven books for children and adults. Her short personal essays have appeared in *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Real Simple*, *The Advocate*, *Woman's Day*, *Orion*, *High Country News*, *Parents*, and numerous other publications. More at [www.melissahart.com](http://www.melissahart.com) .