



Education & Retreat Center

## WELCOME LETTER

### **Beauty in Brevity: Art of the Short Essay**

**Instructor:** Colleen Anderson

**Start Date:** 10/6/19

**End Date:** 10/12/19

Check-In Begins at 3:00pm at the Welcome Center on 10/6/19. Dinner 5:30 – 6:30; Orientation 6:45 pm

**Invitation:** Welcome! Although I have written in many forms (short story, children's novel, poetry, and travel writing), the short essay is my favorite. For years before I began writing essays, I loved hearing the "commentaries" on National Public Radio. One winter, because of a snowstorm that shut down a writers conference, I had the good luck to spend an entire day with one of my favorite commentators, Donald McCaig - and he generously agreed to listen to and critique my first few attempts at essay writing. I was hooked! In my class, I'll try to pass along McCaig's wisdom as well as what I have learned from years of writing short essays for my state's public radio network. In our week together, you'll find your own wellspring, write daily, and get some gentle coaching about how to turn your rough drafts into essays that can engage and move your readers or listeners.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

Expect to write daily, both in our morning class and during the afternoons.

Expect to hear some elegant and moving essays - some I have collected to share with you, some from your peers in our workshop.

Expect gentle coaching, but no harsh critiques.

Expect to laugh, and perhaps to be moved to tears, by the writing you hear and create.

Leave with the tools to write and edit an essay that's compelling and moving.

#### **Course Schedule:**

We will meet in the mornings, from about 9:00 a.m. to noon. Each morning, I will read examples of some wonderful essays I have collected - some from well-known writers and some from people who have participated in my workshops. You'll share your own writing, and we'll discuss your work. Near the end of each session, I'll give you a prompt, and you'll come to the next morning's session with a new piece of writing to share with the group.

**Instructor Background:** I'm one of those people who can't be contented with one vocation: I'm a writer, a graphic designer, a singer-songwriter, and an origami enthusiast. For a number of years, I wrote semi-monthly essays for the West Virginia Public Radio network, two of which won national awards from Public Radio New Directors Incorporated. My other publications include a children's novel, a travel guide to my state of West Virginia, and a poetry chapbook. Please visit my website, [motherwitdesign.com](http://motherwitdesign.com), to learn more.

**Provided Materials:** There won't be a course materials fee. The only essential supplies are paper and pen or pencil. Most participants will choose to bring a laptop or tablet for writing, but it's not essential. You may want to bring a notebook and your favorite writing implement, but I'll also bring plenty of paper and some extra pencils. Ghost Ranch has public computers you may use for typing and printing, as well.

**What to Bring:** A notebook for writing, Your favorite writing implement, Your laptop or tablet (optional)

**FAQs:** Q: I'm a beginning writer. Is this class right for me?

A: Yes. This workshop is accessible to both beginners and accomplished writers. We will learn from one another, but I do not give or tolerate harsh critiques in my workshops.

Q: How short is a short essay?

A: My definition of a short essay is quite brief: a piece can that be read aloud in two or three minutes. You'll be amazed at how much power can be packed into that little package.

**Testimonials:** *"The week at Ghost Ranch changed my way of looking at life. I now write for comfort, pleasure and to share stories with my children and friends."* - Barbara Tarka Leonard

*"Thank you for sharing your mentoring gifts with compassion, clarity, and joy. Thank you for helping me find and trust my voice."* - Jan Meyer

**Recommended Resources:** If you want to read some wonderful short essays, I'd recommend "This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women," edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman and published, in association with NPR, by Holt. Brevity, a journal of short nonfiction writing, is another fine place to explore: [brevitymag.com](http://brevitymag.com)