



# ***Crafting personal essays that compel (and sell)***

**VIRTUAL COURSE. SESSIONS HELD ON A ROLLING BASIS!  
INQUIRE + REGISTER: [VERYMARYGRAY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:VERYMARYGRAY@GMAIL.COM)  
[WWW.VERYMARYGRAY.COM](http://WWW.VERYMARYGRAY.COM)**

Al signori clienti  
che sostano in prossimità  
del Caffè è richiesto  
il rispetto per la quiete  
pubblica

5074



# ***What you'll get***

6 "heaping" hours of live meetings (a mix of lecture, conversation, and essay workshopping), spread over four weeks

Individual attention in intimate group setting (max 4 participants + 1 instructor)

Permanent access to course materials + recordings

Enrichment exercises + recommended readings + instructor support between meetings

Meaningful, focused-but-fun interaction while the world's on fire

Upon request, tailored post-course guidance on potential publishing homes or further polishing of your essay

...all at the pandemic-era-price of 160 euro\*

*\*Payment is made through PayPal (worldwide) or by bank transfer if preferred (EU residents only). Clients are responsible for any (usually nominal) currency conversion fees. All purchases are final.*

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WHY PERSONAL ESSAYS?

# *Course description*

This course focuses on the **underrated and oft-belittled art of the personal essay**. Many Serious Literary Types (SLTs) can't agree on the definition of the form. And thank goodness for that! **Imagined blueprints and intimidating rules never helped any would-be writer pick up a pen.**

In a moment when many feel lonely and listless, this course celebrates the **flexibility and playfulness** that first-person writing affords us. Let's not allow salty SLTs to equate personal essays with diary entries: **good first-person writing requires much more craft than catharsis.**

In **six hours of class time**, spread over four **Sundays**, you'll **mine your memories** for stories, add techniques to your **developing-a-narrative toolkit**, begin or continue the neverending work of **owning your voice**, and **kill all your darlings** (but save them in a Dropbox doc for future revival). You'll finish the course with a well-workshopped **first-person piece** of roughly 900 words, and will receive appropriate guidance in **possible avenues to publication.**





YOUR INSTRUCTOR

# Mary Gray

Mary is a Mississippi-born, Italy-based writer, journalist, and editorial consultant whose work has appeared in The Washington Post, Forbes, Time Out and numerous other outlets. An avowed aesthete with the occasional basic b\*tch tendency, she has taught courses in travel writing and the fashion media landscape for university programs in Florence. Mary's first cover story was a personal essay, penned while she was an editor at monthly magazine The Florentine. During her time on TF's staff, she drew from her daily experiences to create the breezy "Rental Diaries" column, the first 30 volumes of which were recently compiled into a book. Two of Mary's favorite writers are Nora Ephron and Flannery O'Connor, for very different reasons. Like many writers in her age cohort, she simultaneously worships and despises Jia Tolentino, and has a self-indulgent Substack newsletter that's currently learning to crawl.



# ***FAQ + fine print***

**Q: Do I need to be in Italy/your time zone to participate?**

**A:** Absolutely not! The course is open to all English speakers, regardless of location.

**Q: #CovidTimes are unpredictable! If I have to miss a session or withdraw, can I get a refund?**

**A:** No refunds are offered, but you'll retain access to a shared course folder and recordings of each meeting.

**Q: Okay, but what if the group is awful?**

**A:** It's fine if it crossed your mind, but this is an impossible scenario. People who voluntarily sign up for writing classes are always interesting.

**Q: What if *\*you're\** awful?**

**A:** I'm a blonde Libra from the Hospitality State who lives in Italy, so I like to think I'm fun!

**Q: I'm intrigued, but I don't have any real writing experience and feel scared to commit to a course like this.**

**A:** I promise you can handle this. We're playing with personal essay craft, not drafting international policy. As Gertrude Stein (Kathy Bates) says to Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) in *Midnight in Paris*, "We all fear death and question our place in the universe. You have a clear and lively voice! Don't be such a defeatist!"



# *What past students are saying*

"I really enjoyed this class. It was just the thing I needed right now to **get me motivated to write**, and it gave me enough information about personal essay writing to get me started in a genre that I was less familiar with. The class size was perfect. Reading and discussing our essays was **much less intimidating** than it would've been with a larger group."

"**Friendly, charismatic, and knowledgeable instructor.** Felt less like a class and more like a guidebook."

"Gah! I loved this class. It was **just what I needed** during quarantine. **More writing classes should be like this!!!!**"

"**I didn't feel like there was a single wasted minute in this course.** The lectures and the workshop portions were really helpful—I learned a lot! All of the feedback I received on my piece was fantastic."

"Mary, I liked your **warm, southern gal charm**, but mostly I liked how **you made me feel like I could be a writer**. For someone like me who is **new to this world**, it was really helpful."

"Mary's **warm and relaxed teaching style** made me feel at ease [even] while being critiqued. This course provided **the springboard I needed to feel confident** in my own writing again, which is just what I hoped it would do."

"**Please make a part two for course veterans!**"