

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.020

Dates/Times: TR: 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM

Instructor: Azzuré Alexander

E-mail: aia230@nyu.edu

Location: **TBD**

The Importance of Storytelling: Space and Perspective

In this introductory course you will study the basics of fiction and poetry. The added premise of the class is to examine what ways a story or a poem can take up space (both internally and in society), how they can create space when there was none before, and how they can hold space for others. Furthermore, we will attempt to realize the diversity multiple perspectives' can offer and how it can help to evolve your work. Most importantly, you will practice reading as much as possible and learn to experiment with form to further develop your skills as a writer.

“Long before I wrote stories, I listened for stories. Listening for them is something more acute than listening to them. I suppose it’s an early form of participation in what goes on.”

– Eudora Welty

“Stories create community, enable us to see through the eyes of other people, and open us to the claims of others.”

– Peter Forbes

"The stories we tell literally make the world. If you want to change the world, you need to change your story. This truth applies both to individuals and institutions."

– Michael Margolis

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world.”

– Robert McKee

“...It’s a human need to be told stories. The more we’re governed by idiots and have no control over our destinies, the more we need to tell stories to each other about who we are, why we are, where we come from, and what might be possible.”

– Alan Rickman

Structure

Craft lessons on techniques used to facilitate the writing process will be integrated during conversations on reading material. We will examine what tools the writer is using and what affect they have on the reader.

Workshop provides meaningful critique of each other's work. Each student will submit 3 times during the semester. Submissions will be handed in on Thursday's.

Grading

1. Participation (20%)
2. Writing Assignments (30%)
3. Critiques (10%)
4. Reading Assignments/Responses (20%)
5. Revisions (20%)

Attendance Policy

Come to class! Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed **one unexcused absence** during the semester, after that proof of a doctor's note must be provided. Class time is limited so please be on time, **arriving fifteen minutes late counts as a half absence**. For every additional unexcused absence your grade will be deducted one point.

Office Hours:

You are required to meet with me once during the semester (a sign up sheet will be made available during class or via email). Please come prepared with questions on your work or to discuss reading assignments.

Integrity

Value your work. Plagiarizing will be reported to the Dean's office and result in course failure.

Rules of Etiquette

- No electronics used during class. Phones or Computers.
- Please be present for class discussions.
- Respect students who read their work during class.
- Make meaningful and intentional comments during workshop.
- Derogatory comments will not be tolerated.

Assignments

Reading Assessment

For each assigned reading (whether short story, novel, or poem) you will be required to submit one page of reflection (1-3 paragraphs) via NYU Classes. Additionally you will be required to submit a short essay (max 3 pages) on **one** novel or short story collection, and **one** book of poems of your choosing.

Workshop Critiques

Workshop is meant to be helpful, a way for the writer to gauge how their work is reaching the reader. Comments and critiques must be supported by evidence from the text or with reference to outside readings. One page (at least 3 paragraphs) describing at least one thing you liked or felt was working, and what could be improved. Please bring two printed copies to class, one for me and one for the student in workshop. Critiques must include the workshop date, the name of the writer, title of the piece, as well as your name and signature.

In-Class Writing Assignments

Timed writing assignments will be a regular occurrence in class in order to get you in the habit of writing frequently and without over thinking the content. These assignments can be poetry or prose and will not require revision but will be incorporated into your participation grade. You are welcome, but not required, to develop the material into your workshop submissions.

Take-Home Writing Assignments

A writing prompt will be assigned each class, a poem and/or short piece of fiction (2pgs).

Workshop Submissions

You are required to submit **one** short story, **one** piece of poetry, and **one** submission of your choosing (flash fiction or poetry) to be critiqued in class. You will print out copies for everyone in class and hand in your submission the week *before* you are to be critiqued.

Formatting

- Flash Fiction (FF) submissions must be between 300 to 1,500 words (approx. 1-5 pages double spaced)
- Short Story (SS) submissions must be between 2,000 to 5,000 words (approx. 6-20 pages double spaced)
- Poetry (P) submissions may follow whatever format and length to form calls for

Flash Fiction and Short Story submissions should be formatted as follows:

Times New Roman :: 12 pt :: Double Spaced :: 1" Margins

Header aligned Right: Last Name and Page # (Ex: Alexander 1)

First Last Name

Date of Workshop

FF Submission #1 or Prompt (Ex: Write in 2nd Person)

Title

Reading

You are required to attend **one** reading (poetry or fiction) and submit one page of review. On the last day of class each student will read an item of their work in class.

Process Note

You are required to complete a process note (a template will be provided) to evaluate your progress during the semester to be submitted with you final project.

Final Project

At the end of the semester you must hand in a Portfolio that will consist of your four workshop submissions, plus revisions on each of these works. A copy of the original submission with my comments will be required along with the revised submission. You will also include two poems and two fiction pieces from the take home assignments that you feel best displays your writing.

Reading List

Fiction Novels and Short Story Collections

Giovanni's Room by James Baldwin

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino

Little Birds by Anaïs Nin

How to Be Both by Ali Smith

The UnAmericans: Stories by Molly Antopol

Poetry Collections

Erotic Poems by ee cummings

salt. by Nayyirah Waheed

bone by Yrsa Daley-Ward

The Dream of a Common Language by Adrienne Rich

Autobiography of Red by Anne Carson

Short Stories and Poems

“Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway

“Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Connor

“The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe

“It’s Six A.M. Do You Know Where You Are?” by Jay McInerney

“Miss Lora” by Junto Diaz

“The Hit Man” by Ron Carlson

“The Nose” by Nikolai Gogol

“Under the House” by Lynn Freed

“For the Relief of Unbearable Urges” by Nathan Englander

“The Rocking Horse Winner” by D.H. Lawrence

Rumpelstiltskin

“Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” by Joyce Carol Oats

“How Am I Supposed to Talk to You” by Lauren Holmes

Schedule

WEEK 1

❖ Tuesday September 5

- Timed write
- Introductions
- Review schedule and syllabus
 - Determine submission order

- **Assignment**
 - Read “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway
 - Start: *Giovanni’s Room* by James Baldwin
 - Group 1 write FF/P submission (to hand in next class)

❖ Thursday September 7

- Group 1 hand in FF/P for September 14th
- Timed write
- Discuss: “Hills Like White Elephants”
- **Assignment**
 - Read: “Everything That Rises Must Converge” by Flannery O’Connor
 - Read “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe
 - Continue reading: *Giovanni’s Room*
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 2

❖ Tuesday September 12

- Timed write
- Discuss: “Everything That Rises Must Converge”
- Narrative Poem
 - Discuss: “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *Giovanni’s Room*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday September 14

- Group 2 hand in FF/P for September 21st
- Timed write
- Discuss: *Giovanni’s Room*
- Workshop Group 1 (FF/P)
- **Assignment**
 - Start: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 3

❖ Tuesday September 19

- Timed write
- Couplet & Limerick
- Sonnet (20)
 - Edna St. Vincent Millay: “I, Being born a Woman and Distressed”
 - Pop Sonnets
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *The House on Mango Street*
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday September 21
 - Group 3 hand in FF/P for September 28th
 - Timed write
 - Discuss: *The House on Mango Street*
 - Workshop Group 2 (FF/P)
 - **Assignment**
 - Read: “Miss Lora” by Junot Diaz
 - Start: *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino
 - Writing assignment

WEEK 4

- ❖ Tuesday September 26
 - Timed write
 - Discuss: “Miss Lora”
 - “It's Six A.M. Do You Know Where You Are?” by Jay McInerney
 - **Assignment**
 - Finish: *Invisible Cities*
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday September 28
 - Group 4 hand in FF/P for October 5th
 - Timed write
 - Discuss: *Invisible Cities*
 - Workshop Group 3 (FF/P)
 - **Assignment**
 - Read: “The Hit Man” by Ron Carlson
 - Start: “The Nose” by Nikolai Gogol
 - Writing assignment

WEEK 5

- ❖ Tuesday October 3
 - Timed Write
 - Discuss: “The Hit Man”
 - Discuss framework of *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
 - **Assignment**
 - Finish: “The Nose”
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday October 5
 - Group 5 hand in FF/P for October 12th
 - Timed Write
 - Discuss: “The Nose”
 - Workshop Group 4 (FF/P)
 - **Assignment**
 - Read: “Under The House” by Lynn Reed

- Start: *Little Birds* by Anaïs Nin
- Writing assignment

WEEK 6

❖ Tuesday October 10

- In class writing assignment
- Discuss: “Under the House”
- Read *Lolita* excerpt
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *Little Birds*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday October 12

- Group 1 hand in SS for October 19nd
- Timed write
- Discuss: *Little Birds*
- Workshop Group 5 (FF/P)
- **Assignments**
 - Read “For The Relief of Unbearable Urges” by Nathan Englander
 - Start: *erotic poems* by e.e. Cummings
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 7

❖ Tuesday October 17

- In Class writing assignment
- Review handout of poorly written sex scenes
 - Example: *List of Loss* (Morrisey); *Against Nature* (Thomas Espedel); *Fates and Furies* (Lauren Groff); *I am Charlotte Simmons* (Thom Wolf)
- Discuss: “For The Relief of Unbearable Urges”
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *erotic poems*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday October 19

- Group 2 hand in SS for 26th
- Timed write
- Discuss: *erotic poems*
- Workshop Group 1 SS
- **Assignment**
 - Start: *salt.* by Nayyirah Waheed
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 8

❖ Tuesday October 24

- In class writing assignment

- Terza Rima
- Haiku
 - Jack Kerouac
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *salt*.
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday October 26

- Group 3 hand in SS for November 2nd
- Timed write
- Discuss: *salt*.
- Workshop Group 2 SS
- **Assignment**
 - Start: *bone* by Yrsa Daley-Ward
 - Read “The Rocking Horse Winner” by D.H. Lawrence

WEEK 9

❖ Tuesday October 31

- Timed write
- Elegy
 - “Song For the Last Act”, “Nothing Gold Can Stay”, “A Dirge”, “Funeral Blues”
- Discuss: “The Rocking Horse Winner”
- **Assignments**
 - Finish: *bone*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday November 2

- Group 4 hand in SS for November 9th
- Timed write
- Discuss: *bone*
- Workshop Group 3 SS
- **Assignment**
 - Read: “How Am I Supposed to Talk to You” by Lauren Holmes
 - Start: *The Dream of a Common Language* by Adrienne Rich
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 10

❖ Tuesday November 7

- Timed write
- Discuss: “How Am I Supposed to Talk to You”
- Discuss Dialogue
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *Dream of a Common Language*
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday November 9
 - Group 5 hand in SS for November 16th
 - Timed write
 - Discuss: *Dream of a Common Language*
 - Workshop Group 4 SS
 - **Assignment**
 - Watch: *Star Wars: A New Hope*
 - Start: *How to Be Both* by Ali Smith

WEEK 11

- ❖ Tuesday November 14
 - In class writing assignment
 - Epic Poems
 - The Hero's Journey
 - **Assignment**
 - Read: "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been" by Joyce Carol Oates
 - Continue reading *How to be Both*
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday November 16
 - Group 1 hand in P for 21st
 - Timed Write
 - Discuss: "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"
 - Workshop Group 5 SS
 - **Assignment**
 - Finish: *How to be Both*
 - Writing Prompt

WEEK 12

- ❖ Tuesday November 21
 - Timed write
 - Discuss: *How to be Both*
 - Workshop Group 1 P
 - **Assignment**
 - Start: *The UnAmericans: Stories* by Molly Antopol
 - Writing prompt

- ❖ Thursday November 23: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING RECESS
 - Group 2 and 3 Email P for November 30th

WEEK 13

- ❖ Tuesday November 28
 - Villanelle
 - Dylan Thomas: "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"
 - Theodore Roethke: "The Waking"

- Sylvia Plath: “Mad Girl’s Love Song”
- Ballad
 - Ezra Pound: “Masks”
- Workshop Group 2 P
- **Assignment**
 - Finish *The UnAmericans: Stories*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday November 30

- Group 4 and 5 hand in P for December 7th
- Timed write
- Discuss: *The UnAmericans: Stories*
- Workshop Group 3 P
- **Assignment**
 - Read: *Rumpelstiltskin*
 - Start: *Autobiography of Red* by Anne Carson
 - Writing prompt

WEEK 14

❖ Tuesday December 5

- Timed write
- Discuss: *Rumpelstiltskin*
- Workshop Group 4 P
- **Assignment**
 - Finish: *Autobiography of Red*
 - Writing prompt

❖ Thursday December 7

- Timed Write
- Discuss: *Autobiography in Red*
- Workshop Group 5 P
- **Assignment**
 - Complete Portfolio and Process Note

WEEK 15 :: FINAL CLASS

❖ Tuesday December 12: NO CLASS—MONDAY SCHEDULE

❖ Thursday December 14: Final Class

- Portfolios Due
- Class Reading’s