

Introduction Creative Writing – Fiction & Poetry
Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.012
Times: TH 12:30-1:45PM
Location: 60 5th Ave, Rm 250

Instructor: Kathryn Bockino
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Office hours: 1:45-3PM TH or by appointment

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one.”
— George R.R. Martin,

“If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.”
— Toni Morrison

Course Overview/Why You're Here:

Every few months a new article emerges. Forbes – “Why Leaders Must Be Readers.” The New York Times – “Writing Your Way to Happiness.” The Huffington Post – “This One Activity Will Help Raise a Child Who Is Kind And Successful.” Not to spoiler the article, but they're talking about reading.

By picking up a story or a poem you may find yourself chasing an adventure. And by picking up the pen (or placing your fingers over a row of keys) you can create your own. The goal of this class is to explore, create, and discover.

Whether you are thinking about majoring or minoring in this discipline, want to learn more about words and their impact, or simply explore what it means to be a writer and reader in 2017, you are in the right place.

There are two components to this class. The first is craft. We will be reading, studying, and analyzing different poems and stories from yesterday and today. We also will be practicing different elements of craft through writing exercises. The second is workshop. You will be submitting two short stories and two poems throughout this semester, while also giving your fellow students feedback on their own work.

Welcome to Intro to Creative Writing!

Course Structure/Your Average Tuesday & Thursday:

Each class we will combine craft and workshop. The first twenty minutes will be looking at the story and/poem assigned for that day and analyzing them through the eyes of a writer. That is, taking a closer look at what works and why (and what doesn't), and how we can apply this to our own writing. If there was a writing exercise due that day, we will also share and discuss these works.

The remaining part of each class will be workshop. We will workshop either two peer fiction stories (15 minutes apiece), or three peer poems (10 minutes apiece), depending on the week.

Office Hours/Time to Gush Over Reading & Writing:

I encourage you to meet with me twice this semester. However, you are welcome to meet with me more. A good time to schedule an appointment (by email) is after the first time your story or poem is workshopped, halfway through the semester, or before your final portfolio is due.

We will meet right after class in the same room. In the event that there's a class after ours, I'll find an unoccupied room nearby. If you can't make it in that time slot, email me and we can meet anytime by appointment.

Technology Policy/The Old-School Method:

Silenced and stowed please. Bring a notebook with you for in class craft assignments.

Required Texts/Your New Best Friends:

- Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life, 1st Edition by Anne Lamott
- A Poetry Handbook by Mary Oliver
- All other readings will be provided in PDF or as a link to the online published versions. Bring each story/poem to class on the day that they are assigned.

Grading/Grading:

- *40% Workshop Entries*
 - 10% for each submission (there will be two fiction and two poetry). These will be handed in one week before they are workshopped. No late submissions will be accepted. If there is a problem please contact me.
- *10% At Home Writing Assignments*
 - 10 short at home writing exercises.
- *20% Peer Responses*
 - Typed responses (one for me and one for the writer) given each time a student is workshopped.
- *15% Attendance & Participation*
 - Attendance is vital in creating a successful workshop environment. In order to develop a critical eye, give constructive feedback, and receive responses on your own writing, you must be present. You get two free absences over the course of the semester. Every unexcused absence after that will dock 1/3 off of your grade. (This means an A will drop to an A-, an A- will drop to a B+, etc.) An excused absence includes a formal doctor's note or similarly official document. If you are twenty minutes or more late, it is counted as an unexcused absence.
 - Participation in craft discussions and workshops is important not only for you but for your classmates. Your thoughts and insights might mirror your classmates', or they might help them see something new. Either way, the only way for this to happen is to be fully engaged in discussion.
- *15% Portfolio*
 - On the last day of class, you will hand in a final portfolio (in a folder or binder) that consists of one rewritten workshop poem and one rewritten workshop story. Both the story and the poem need to have significant

revisions that go beyond grammar and surface level editing. Use what you learned in craft lessons and workshop feedback to take your piece to a new level. Along with these two revisions, please include a one page reflection about your revision. Finally, please include a cover page with the title of your portfolio, your name, and date.

- *Extra Credit (total of 5%)*
 - Attend two NYU readings and write up a short response about each (within the week of said reading) on your thoughts, what you learned, and what struck you the most.

Craft Assignments:

- *Reading*
 - Prior to most class sessions you will be asked to read a story, a poem, and/or a chapter from one of our craft books that challenges you to look for a particular craft element. This might be dialogue, character development, language, action, and so forth. To be prepared all you need to do is read them and come to class with some ideas on how the story/poem utilizes that element.
- *Writing Assignments*
 - There will be 10 short at home writing assignments throughout the semester. Some, we might begin in class, and then finish at home. None of these will be longer than one single spaced page. They will challenge you to practice a different craft element in either poetry and/or fiction.

Workshop Assignments:

- *Submitting Original Work*
 - You will be turning in two fiction stories (between 6-15 pages long) and two poems throughout the semester. One week before they are workshopped (so always keep checking the syllabus) you will hand in 16 printed copies to the class. You can always use the writing exercises as a springboard if you are unsure where to start!
 - Fiction pieces will be typed with numbered pages, double spaced, in Times New Roman 12-point font. Don't forget to put your name and date on the top of the first page as well!
- *Peer Responses*
 - You will be writing responses to your peers' workshop pieces each time a classmate hands in a workshop piece. They are to be a typed letter (e.g. "Dear John Doe") and ½ to one page single spaced. The purpose of these are to give constructive criticism that will help the story/poem. Remember: you are trying to make their work the best version of itself. Avoid general statements that say, "I liked this." Instead try, "This element worked well in the story because..." For critiques try, "perhaps aspects A, B, C of the story would be more powerful/impactful/have stronger clarity if you tried..." Please print two copies each time. One for the writer, and one for me to look over and give you feedback on.

- You also will be making notes on the hard copy of the story/poem you were given. These can be comments, suggestions, and corrections.

Plagiarism:

All NYU rules about plagiarism and academic integrity apply. All instances of plagiarism will be reported.

Schedule Fall 2017:

Note: please have read each story/poem BY the date it is listed.

Week One: Hello & Welcome

Tuesday September 5th:

- Introduction, Review Syllabus, Create Workshop Schedule

Thursday September 7th:

- Discuss: “How to Become a Writer” by Lorrie Moore
- Discuss: “Shitty First Drafts” in *Bird by Bird*. Also “Getting Ready” and “Reading Poems” in *A Poetry Handbook*
- Writing Exercise #1 (in class): Grid Media Experiment
- In class watch M. NourbeSe Philip perform/read from *Zong!*

Week Two: From Yesterday, to Today

Tuesday, September 12th:

- Discuss: “Because I could not stop for death” by Emily Dickinson
- Discuss: “*Zong! #1*,” “Glossary: Words and Phrases Overheard on Board the *Zong*,” and “Manifest” by M. NourbeSe Philip
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, September 14th:

- Discuss: “The Wives of the Dead” by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Discuss: “The Cheater’s Guide to Love” by Junot Díaz
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Week Three: Character & Voice

Tuesday, September 19th:

- Discuss: “The Great Silence” by Ted Chiang
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, September 21st:

- Discuss: “On Parting” and “High School as a Dead Girl” by Cate Marvin
- Discuss: “Diction, Sound, Voice” in a Poetry Handbook
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Week Four: Formatting/ Structure

Tuesday, September 25th:

- Discuss: “A Quiz” by Leslie Pietrzyk
- Discuss: “Plot” in Bird by Bird
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, September 28th:

- Discuss: “What were they like?” Denise Levertov
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Writing Exercise #2: Hermit Crab Assignment

Week Five: Music

Tuesday, October 3rd:

- Discuss: “Sound” in A Poetry Handbook
- Discuss: “A Hand Reached Down to Guide Me” by David Gates OR “This Is Not a Love Song” by Brendan Mathews
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, October 5th:

- Discuss: “More Devices of Sound” in A Poetry Handbook
- Discuss: “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou
- Workshop 1 Fiction Story
- Writing Exercise #3: Create a playlist for your story/poem OR for a character

Week Six: Setting

Tuesday, October 10th:

- Discuss: “God” by Benjamin Nugent
- Discuss: “Set Design” in Bird by Bird
- Workshop 3 Poems
- Share playlists and create a class Spotify playlist.

Thursday, October 12th:

- Discuss: “All That Blue Fire,” “Post- Industrialization,” and “Borderama,” by Erika Meitner
- Workshop 3 Poems
- Writing Exercise #4: Observation Exercise

Week Seven: Race & Gender

Tuesday, October 17th:

- Discuss: “Ode to the Clitoris,” and “Ode to the Penis” by Sharon Olds

- Workshop 3 Poems

Thursday, October 19th:

- Discuss: “Sonny's Blues” by James Baldwin
- Workshop 3 Poems

Week Eight: Genre/ What Even is Genre?

Tuesday, October 24th:

- Discuss: “The Rememberer” by Aimee Bender
- Workshop 3 Poems

Thursday, October 26th:

- Discuss: “The Giaour [Unquenched, unquenchable]” by Lord Byron and “Djinn” by Rae Armantrout
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Writing Exercise #5: Write a poem/story from a non-human point of view.

Week Nine: “Borrowing”/ Drawing Inspiration from Anywhere

Tuesday, October 31st:

- Discuss: “Madame Bovary’s Greyhound” by Karen Russell
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Listen to Hamilton Soundtrack in Class

Thursday, November 2nd:

- Discuss: “Blackacre” by Monica Youn
- Discuss: “Imitation” from A Poetry Handbook
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Writing Exercise #6: You are Frankenstein. Write a letter to Mary Shelley thanking her for making your story known. (poem or story)

Week Ten: Dialogue

Tuesday, November 7th:

- Discuss: “The Veldt” by Ray Bradbury
- Discuss: “Dialogue” in Bird by Bird
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, November 9th:

- Discuss: “Dialogue Between Ghost And Priest” by Sylvia Plath
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Writing Exercise #7: Pilot of Crashing Jumbo Jet Exercise (poem or story)

Week Eleven: Openings & Closings

Tuesday, November 14th:

- Discuss: “Until Gwen” by Dennis Lehane
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories

Thursday, November 16th:

- Discuss: “Mystic Bounce” and “Cocktails with Orpheus” by Terrance Hayes
- Workshop 2 Fiction Stories
- Writing Exercise #8: Convince the captain on your character’s boat they should get the last life jacket. They don’t have long, so every moment counts.

Week Twelve: Historical

Tuesday, November 21st:

- Discuss: “The Last Time I Saw Amelia Earhart,” by Gabrielle Calvocoressi
- Discuss: Excerpt from *Gates of Fire* by Steven Pressfield
- Writing Exercise #9: Titanic Exercise (Poem or Story)
- Watch Titanic Clip in Class
- 1 Workshopped Fiction Stories

Thursday, November 23rd:

- NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK ☺!

Week Thirteen: Building Tension

Tuesday, November 28th:

- Discuss: “The Invisibles” by Hugh Sheehy
- Workshop 3 Poems

Thursday, November 30th:

- Discuss: “America” by Allen Ginsberg
- Workshop 3 Poems

Week Fourteen: Young Adult

Tuesday, December 5th:

- Discuss: “Just Listen” excerpt by Sarah Dessen
- Workshop 3 Poems

Thursday, December 7th:

- Discuss: “The Single Pine” by Leza Lowitz
- Workshop 3 Poems
- Writing Exercise #10: Create a YA premise based off a painting/photo we look at in class. After, write a paragraph explaining why this story would be YA.

Week Fifteen: Wrap Up

Tuesday, December 12th:

- Discuss: “Revision” from A Poetry Handbook and “How Do You Know When You’re Done?” from Bird by Bird
- Workshop 3 Poems

Thursday, December 14th:

- Share Portfolios, Goodbyes