

Introduction to Creative Writing
CRWRI-UA.815.021
Fall 2016, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00-3:15pm

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3:30-5:00pm

INTRODUCTION

In this class, we will aim to approach texts as writers. This means we will read with an eye for how poems and stories are working beneath the surface and mine for our own purposes as writers. In addition to reading the work of poets and authors outside our class, we will critically and generously read the work of the writers in our own group. The class will be divided into two parts: craft and workshop. On craft days, we will discuss weekly readings with the intention of honing our skill as writers and expanding our toolbox of literary and poetic techniques. Workshops are designed to allow for you to give rigorous, useful feedback on your peer's work and receive feedback on your own, all working together to get better at this very challenging business.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Final Portfolio

Instead of a formal final exam, you will turn in a final portfolio on the last day of class. This portfolio is designed to track the evolution of your writing throughout the class. Your portfolio will include a statement for writing, a short 2-3-page double-spaced paper that communicates your beliefs about craft in response to our class, and your revised poems and stories. Include the original drafts of your stories and poems with my comments. You must creatively title your portfolio and include a table of contents and page numbers.

Weekly Reading

As writers, we should spend at least as much time reading the work of others as we spend writing our own projects. **This is a reading intensive course** and will include multiple poems and at least one short story a week, in addition to regular craft readings. It is crucial that you keep up with our reading and come to class eager to dig into our texts. Weekly packets will be distributed either in class or posted online. You are responsible for printing out readings in advance of class and coming prepared to discuss. We will also be reading from two books on craft which you should either purchase or check out from the NYU or NYP libraries.

Workshop Submissions

Over the course of the class, your own creative work will be workshopped 4 times – once every three weeks. **Workshop submissions are due Thursday at 11:59pm the week before your group is being workshopped.** It is of the utmost importance that you turn in work by the deadline so that your peers have time to thoughtfully consider it before workshop. With this in mind, late submissions *will not* be workshopped, and will negatively affect your grade. It is your choice if you wish to submit fiction or poetry each week for class, but you must write in each genre at least once. Short stories should be between 7-15 pages, double-spaced with 1 inch margins in a 12-pt standard font (Times New Roman, Garamond, etc.). Please number your pages. Poems should

be no longer than 2 pages. Please include your name, the date, and your workshop group at the top of both story and poem submissions.

Workshop Critiques

You are responsible for printing out your peer's workshop submissions each week and bringing them to class. Additionally, you must closely read these submissions in advance and come to class with them marked up – you will hand these submissions back to their writer during class. These comments go beyond simple line edits for grammar, spelling, clarity. What is working in your peer's piece? What isn't working? What did you find exciting and important? What feels stale and in need of greater attention?

Writing Exercises

Each Tuesday, you will be given a writing exercise designed to help you explore the aspects of craft we discussed that week. It will be due hardcopy in class the following Tuesday. These are an opportunity for you to experiment and take risks. They are separate from workshop submissions, but if one of your exercises is fruitful, you are welcome to submit it for workshop.

Event Review

At least once during the semester, you will attend a literary panel or reading and report back to me on your experience in the form of a one page singled-spaced review. This does not have to be formal. What did you find interesting/inspiring/intriguing? What didn't you like? Email this to me at any point during the semester before the last day of class (12/14).

Recitations

Poetry is made to be heard aloud. There is nothing better than starting class with some words in the air. You will memorize and recite at least 25 lines of poetry over the course of the semester. These can be all at once (I once was in a class with someone who recited the whole of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock") or divided up into smaller batches of 5 or 15 lines at a time. We will keep this informal – but we will sign up for tentative recitation dates during our second class (just to prevent folks from procrastinating to the last week of the semester!). This is not a quiz in memorization, but an opportunity for you to take a small risk in a supportive group.

Conferences

I expect that you will meet with me once during the semester to discuss your work in depth. If my office hours do not work with your schedule, email me and we will find a time that works.

GRADING

Participation and Conferences – 35%

Full points are given to students who attend each class ready and eager to approach the work of writing with active discussion, written notes of feedback on work, and meet with me at least once during the semester.

Written Work – 20%

Full points are given to students who turn in all writing exercises and workshop submissions on time.

Recitation – 5%

Full points are given to students who recite at least 25 lines of poetry over the course of the semester.

Event Review – 5%

Full points are given to students who attend one literary event over the course of the semester and report back to me with a thoughtful review on time.

Final Portfolio – 35%

Full points are given to students who submit a complete final portfolio on time consisting of a bold statement for writing and revised poems and stories. Your portfolio **must** show revision. Unrevised pieces will not receive credit.

POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

As this class is discussion based, it is essential that you are here every class—especially on workshop days. You get one free unexcused absence for the semester. After that, each absence will result in a lowering of your final grade (A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, etc.).

Tardiness is unacceptable. Plan to arrive to class 5 minutes early. Two late arrivals equal one unexcused absence.

Late Work

I will only accept late work in extraordinary circumstances. Turn in work on time.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable. It will result in a failing grade and be reported to the university.

Technology

No phones or laptops are permitted during class. Please print off all readings and workshop submissions in advance. Bring hard copies of our books.

Content

We will read and discuss texts in this class that may be potentially triggering or include things that are challenging or disturbing. If you are struggling with any of our texts for any reason, please let me know. In your own work, I have an obligation as a member of the faculty to report any material that indicates that a student might harm him or her self or others as well as anything that might indicate a sexual assault or other violent crime has occurred. The last thing I want is to misinterpret a cry for help. Submit any writing which exhibits specific, potential dangers, especially about young people of college age—like murder, depression, or suicide—and you may expect a brief note or email from me to make sure you are doing okay.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*.
New York: Anchor Books, 1994.

Kenneth Koch, *Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry*.
New York: Touchstone, 1999.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE & READINGS

Readings not from our two craft books will be posted on NYU Classes in weekly packets.

Tuesday, September 5	Introductions & Housekeeping
Thursday, September 7	Mock Workshop Reading: Jeremiah Chamberlin, “Workshop Is Not for You,” Chapters “Getting Started”, “Shitty First Drafts”, “Perfectionism”, “Writing Groups” from <i>Bird by Bird</i>
Tuesday, September 12	Craft: Image & Metaphor Reading: Chapter “Polaroids” from <i>Bird by Bird</i> , “The Fish” (Elizabeth Bishop), “Neutral Tones” (Thomas Hardy), “Facing It” (Yusef Komunyakaa), “You’re” (Sylvia Plath), “I’m” (Catherine Wing), “Passover” from <i>Nowhere Man</i> (Aleksandar Hemon)
Thursday, September 14	Workshop Group 1
Tuesday, September 19	Craft: Rhythm & Sound Reading: Chapter “Music” from <i>Making Your Own Days</i> , “Jabberwocky” (Lewis Carroll), “Pied Beauty” (Gerard Manley Hopkins), “Mips and ma the mooly moo” (Theodore Roethke), “Fever 103” (Sylvia Plath), “A Real Durwan” from <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (Jhumpa Lahiri)
Thursday, September 21	Workshop Group 2
Tuesday, September 26	Craft: Character & Voice Reading: Chapter “The Two Languages” from <i>Making Your Own Days</i> , Chapter “Character” from <i>Bird by Bird</i> , “A & P” (John Updike), “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong” (Ocean Vuong), “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” (Christopher Marlowe), “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (Sir Walter Raleigh), “Raleigh Was Right” (William Carlos Williams)
Thursday, September 28	Workshop Group 3
Tuesday, October 3	Craft: Point of View & Persona Reading: “We Didn’t” (Stuart Dybek), “Great Rock and Roll Pauses” from <i>A Visit from the Goon Squad</i> (Jennifer Egan), “Mushrooms” (Sylvia Plath), “brothers” (Lucille Clifton), “Emperor of Ice Cream” (Wallace Stevens), “The Cowboy” (James Tate)
Thursday, October 5	Workshop Group 1
Tuesday, October 10	Craft: Plot & Narrative Reading: “Zone” (Guillaume Apollinaire), “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” (Flannery O’Connor), “Once in A Lifetime” (Jhumpa Lahiri), Chapter “Plot” from <i>Bird by Bird</i>
Thursday, October 12	Workshop Group 2
Tuesday, October 17	Craft: Setting & Place Reading: “Arrival at Santos” (Elizabeth Bishop), “City Visit” (Adam Haslett), “Frost at Midnight” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge) and more TBD
Thursday, October 19	Workshop Group 3
Tuesday, October 24	Craft: Poetic Forms

	Reading: “The Waking” (Theodore Roethke), “We Real Cool” (Gwendolyn Brooks), “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” (John Keats), “Ozymandias” (Percy Shelley), “Carrion Comfort” (Gerard Manley Hopkins), “State Bird” (Ada Limón) and more TBD
Thursday, October 26	Workshop Group 1
Tuesday, October 31	Craft: Death & Elegy Reading: “One Art” (Elizabeth Bishop), “You Ask How” (Nick Flynn), “Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone” (W.H. Auden), “Poem” (Lana Turner has collapsed!) Frank O’Hara, excerpts from <i>Lincoln in the Bardo</i> (George Saunders)
Thursday, November 2	Workshop Group 2
Tuesday, November 7	Craft: Sex & the Body Reading: “High Windows” (Philip Larkin), “homage to my hips” (Lucille Clifton), “Aurora” (Junot Diaz), excerpts from <i>Middlesex</i> (Jeffrey Eugenides)
Thursday, November 9	Workshop Group 3
Tuesday, November 14	Craft: Description & Odes Reading: “The Things They Carried” (Tim O’Brien), “Ode of Girls’ Things” (Sharon Olds), “The Monument” (Elizabeth Bishop) and more TBD
Thursday, November 16	Workshop Group 1
Tuesday, November 21	Craft: Synesthesia Reading TBD
Thursday, November 23	No Class Thanksgiving Recess
Tuesday, November 28	Transformations Reading: “The Little Car” (Guillaume Apollinaire), “On the Road to Sri Bhuvaneshwari” (Robin Coste Lewis)
Thursday, November 30	Workshop Group 2
Tuesday, December 5	Craft: Revision Chapter “Writing” from <i>Making Your Own Days</i> , Chapter “How Do You Know When You’re Done?” from <i>Bird by Bird</i> . Revision packet.
Thursday, December 7	Workshop Group 3
Tuesday, December 12	No Class Legislative Day – classes meet on a Monday schedule
Thursday, December 14	Last Class Celebration, Class Reading, Final Portfolios Due Reading: Chapters “Someone to Read Your Drafts” and “The Last Class” from <i>Bird by Bird</i>