CREATIVE WRITING: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY AND FICTION
Course: CRWRI-UA 815.001
Time: Mon/Wed 1:30-4:40pm.

Instructor: Jessica Ramirez
Email: Ymr213@nyu.edu
Location: 194 Mercer Street 201 Loc: Washington Square
Office Hours: Before or after class, by appointment.

“I tell my students that when you write, you should pretend you’re writing the best letter you ever wrote to the smartest friend you have. That way, you’ll never dumb things down. You won’t have to explain things that don’t need explaining. You’ll assume an intimacy and a natural shorthand, which is good because readers are smart and don’t wish to be condescended to. I think about the reader. I care about the reader. Not “audience.” Not “readership.” Just the reader.” -- Jeff Eugenides

CLASS OVERVIEW
In this course you’ll study the craft of poetry and fiction with the goal of developing your voice as a writer. We’ll do this by dividing each class into craft and workshop. In the craft portion, we’ll read poetry and prose. The focus will be on what an author achieves through voice, structure, dialogue and POV and how he/she achieves it. We’ll also keep a writer notebook where we’ll include any craft-related writing prompts, homework assignments, and writing notes. In the workshop portion of the course, you’ll submit your own fiction and poetry and receive constructive notes from classmates. The intent is to give you the kind of feedback that helps you see what you are conveying successfully and what could use another look as you revise your work. This is an intro class so most importantly we’re here to experiment, have fun, and become stronger readers and writers.

CLASS STRUCTURE

CRAFT
What You’ll Do: The best way to learn about writing is to read a lot, which is precisely what we’ll do. Before the semester begins, you’ll receive a schedule of weekly reading assignments from a diverse group of writers. My hope is that we’ll be able to mine each of these pieces for techniques you can learn to apply to your own work.

To ensure we get the most out of this, I’ll assign occasional writing prompts to be completed outside of class. Don’t overthink these. Trust your curiosity and see what comes of that.

What You’ll Need: A writer notebook, which I’ll provide in the first class. We’ll add in-class writing assignments, reading notes and anything else related to writing in this notebook. Please date and name each entry. I’ll be asking to look at these half way through the semester.

Also, always bring a copy of your reading assignment to class. Read it before class. Twice, if
possible. Notice what you notice. Note 1-3 items in your writer notebook that you found interesting. It can be a quote. It can be the use of language. It can be the way a scene is laid out. It can be something you like. Or not. Just notice what you notice. We’ll discuss these in class.

COURSE TEXTS
Class Website: https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/creativewriting
Novel: Exit West
Writer Notebook (Note: These will be provided by the instructor in the first class.)

WORKSHOP
You will submit your work three times. One fiction piece, one poetry piece, and one piece of your choice. Bring enough copies of your submission for everyone in class on your assigned submission date. Include your full name, working title of the piece, date, and page numbers.

Writer Submission Format
Short Story: 5-15 pages double spaced (12pt font, 1” margins, Times New Roman, or similar serif font only.)

Poetry: 1-5 pages, single spaced, unless purposefully formatted otherwise.

Writer’s Choice: Flash fiction (1-5 pages double spaced), or a poem (1-3 pages single spaced), or a short story (5-10 pages double spaced)

Reader Response Format
You will read workshop submissions twice. The first time as a reader. The second time to provide handwritten line edits. This means marking sentences that you like, suggesting improvements, adding questions on anything that is not clear, and noting any errors you find. You will then write a letter to the author, around 250 words, providing feedback on what worked and any suggestions you may have to better the piece. Bring two (2) printed copies of the letter to class.

General Workshop Etiquette
We all have different ways of approaching writing. The goal of workshop is to make that writing stronger, but to do that well, respect is key. We will cover what that means using a workshop example that I bring to our first class. For now, consider the following items.

While you’re being workshopped you should take notes in your writer notebook on anything that you think will be helpful to your revision. Also, take note of any questions you may have for the class. You will not be allowed to talk while your piece is being workshopped, but you may ask questions at the end.

If you are providing feedback here are a few things to remember as you do this:

--Be specific about the strengths of the work first. Then make specific suggestions about areas for improvement.
--Remember to separate the work from the author. Speak about the story and the characters, not the author or his/her intentions.

--You won’t like everything you read in class. You don’t have to. But you do have to show respect, courtesy, and provide the kind feedback you would hope to get if the piece was yours.

Note: If you feel that anything has become overly unpleasant or insensitive, or if you’ve got a question about how to balance criticism and kindness, please contact me outside of class.

CLASS POLICIES & GRADES

Attendance: You’re required to come to every class, on time. If you miss more than one class, each additional absence will result in the loss of a half letter grade (A becomes A-, etc). If you’re more than 15 minutes late twice, it will count as an absence. Absences related to a medical or other emergency circumstance must be accompanied by a doctor’s (or other official) note.

Electronic Devices: Silence them or turn them off before class starts.

Plagiarism: Don’t do it. Any instance of plagiarism will be reported to the department and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with NYU policy.

Office Hours: Students are required to come see me at least once during office hours. The point of coming in to chat is so that we can talk about your work and how I can be of help. Ideally, it should be the week after you are workshopped. If you are unable to meet during scheduled office hours, please contact me so we can make other arrangements.

Final Portfolio: A revised portfolio of your work is due on the last day of class. The portfolio will include the following:

1. Cover Page with your Name, Date, Email Address
2. A letter that reflects on what you’ve written, what the revision process has taught you, what stories we read most shaped your thinking this semester, and what kind of writer you’d like to be as you move forward. 1-2 double spaced pages.
3. My original critiqued copies for your three workshop submissions.
4. Substantially revised versions of two of those submissions.

Grading Policy
30% Class Participation & Preparation
25% Workshop Submission & Peer Feedback
25% Craft Responses & Writer Notebook
20% Final Portfolios