Creative Writing: Intro to Poetry and Fiction
Instructor: Lucas Jorgensen
M/W: 2:30-3:15
Email: lj1278@nyu.edu
Office hours: by appointment

Course Goals and Outline:

By the end of this course, students should demonstrate an understanding of creative writing craft and be able to apply this knowledge within their own writing. Students should also leave this course with an understanding of workshop procedure and the ability to offer thorough and thoughtful critique.

We will meet these goals by first completing a survey of the basic elements of fiction and poetry craft. This will give students the tools necessary to work on their own writing through the lens of craft which will later be workshopped in class. This survey will be done in the style of a discussion where we read and respond to selected works in respect to our week’s topic.

Next, we will move into workshop. Each workshop day will be started with a ten-minute craft discussion that is meant to cover a smaller and more specific topic. If the first part of the class is a macroscopic view, these craft lessons will be microscopic. This will also act as a warm-up for the workshopping of students’ work that will follow.

Course Work and Grading:

Responses: (30%)
Readings: Each class we will have readings to fuel our discussion. As a place to begin, will bring in a half-page response to the reading. These responses should include craft that stood out to them, the things they liked or disliked, and the things students can keep in mind for their own writing (and explain why).

Critique: At the end of each workshop day, students’ comments on a workshop piece will be turned into me. For a poem or micro fiction piece, at least three substantial comments must be made. More feedback than this is always okay and encouraged. For a short fiction piece, at least five should be made.

Participation: (40%)
Attendance: Attendance to this class is mandatory; it is very difficult to replace work done inside class with work done outside. Students will be given two no-questions-asked absences. Any absences beyond this will result in a 5% grade deduction. School-excused absences such as documented illness, bereavement, religious holidays, etc. will not be included in this count so long as they are properly documented and I am notified.

Involvement in class: As this course is highly discussion-based, it is important for students to share their thoughts and be involved in class. This will be important both in our craft discussions and in the workshops where we will be critiquing student work.
Writing: (30%) 

Final portfolio: This portfolio will contain a sample of writing that was worked on for this class which the student feels is a best representation of their work. This portfolio will also include an artist’s statement regarding their revision process and the elements of craft they feel like they have embodied in their work. This will include three poems and two fiction pieces.

Workshop: Each week after our craft survey, students’ work will be workshopped. Students will workshop three poems and two short fiction pieces (one will be a piece of micro-fiction or a short-short). Copies will be due the Monday before the piece is workshopped.

Off-week writings: Three times throughout the semester when they do not have workshop pieces due, students will turn writing in directly to me for feedback. One of these writings, of the student’s choice, will be brought in and discussed with me in conferences.

*Quality of writing and ‘talent’ will not be considered factors for the grading of the assignments in this section. Workshops and off-week writings will be graded on completion. The final portfolio must show signs of revision and polish, as well as a thoughtful artist’s statement and attempts to incorporate craft.*

**Required Reading Materials:**

*Night Sky with Exit Wounds* — Ocean Vuong  
*The Carrying* — Ada Limón  
*The ECCO Anthology of Contemporary American Short Fiction*

This course will also include a number of readings which are either available for free online or will be made available to you on the class site in the form of a pdf. These selections will help to give a more diverse viewpoint (than what an anthology and two collections can provide) and will include non-creative writing such as craft essays to foster a more holistic approach.

**Electronics:**

During craft discussions electronics will be allowed out so that students may access online documents. However, if a student is caught engaging with non-class material, they may be asked to print out these documents for class instead.

There will be no devices in use during workshop.

**Academic Honesty:**

Work that is submitted for this class must be the students’ own work. Do not share work and do not plagiarize. Any violations of this will be reported.

**Disability Disclosure Statement:**

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, or at 726 Broadway (2nd floor) or
Course Calendar:

Monday 1/27: Syllabus day and introductions. Introductory discussion on contemporary creative writing.

Wednesday 1/29: Fiction Craft Discussion: Structures and Organizations

Monday 2/3: Poetry Craft Discussion: Narrative, Lyric, and the Experimental

Wednesday 2/5: Fiction Craft Discussion: Time, Place, and Verisimilitude
Readings: “The Toughest Indian in the World” by Sherman Alexie, “This Story Would Make a Good Essay” (Essay) by Paul Crenshaw, selection from What is the What by Dave Eggers, “Fascinated to Presume: In Defense of Fiction” (essay) by Zadie Smith

Monday 2/10: Poetry Craft Discussion: Form

Wednesday 2/12: Fiction Craft Discussion: Characters and Point of View
Readings: “Off” by Aimee Bender, “When We Were Happy We Had Other Names” by Yiyun Li, “How to Write Compelling Characters” (essay) by David Corbett

Monday 2/17: No Class, Presidents’ Day

Wednesday 2/19: Poetry Craft Discussion: Structure, Lines, and Stanzas

Monday 2/24: Fiction Craft Discussion: Symbolism and the Figurative

Wednesday 2/26: Poetry Craft Discussion: Imagery and Music
Readings: “how many of us have them” by Danez Smith, “The Blue Dress” by Saeed Jones, selection from What Runs Over by Kaleb Rae Candrilli, “Rabits on Fire” by Alberto Ríos, “My Godlessness” by Sharon Olds
Monday 3/2: Workshop Fiction 1 & Fiction Craft Discussion: Dialogue
Readings: selection from Beloved by Toni Morrison

Wednesday 3/4: Workshop Fiction 1
Readings: “Landfill” by Joyce Carol Oates

Monday 3/9: Workshop Fiction 1
Readings: “Aurora” by Junot Díaz

Wednesday 3/11: Workshop Fiction 1
Readings: “Television” by Lydia Davis

Monday 3/16: No Class, Spring Break

Wednesday 3/18: No Class, Spring Break

Monday 3/23: Workshop Poetry 1 & Poetry Craft Discussion: The Speaker

Wednesday 3/25: Workshop Poetry 1
Readings: Night Sky With Exit Wounds pgs 3-30

Monday 3/30: Workshop Poetry 1
Readings: Night Sky With Exit Wounds pgs 31-58

Wednesday 4/1: Workshop Fiction 2
Readings: “Baboons” by Sheila Kohler

Monday 4/6: Workshop Fiction 2 & Craft Discussion: Developing Voice
Readings: Rather than doing any readings, please come to class having a half page of notes written down describing the writing you have done so far in this class. Focus on the positives and the things that distinguish your work from other’s. Ask yourself: how can I tell that this poem or story is mine? Repeat this process except looking outwards, at the piece we’ve read for our craft discussions which has spoken to you most this semester. These responses will be the basis for our craft discussion in class today.

Wednesday 4/8: Class not meeting: One on one conferences instead

Monday 4/13: Class not meeting: One on one conferences instead

Wednesday 4/15: Workshop Fiction 2
Readings: “Night Women” by Edwidge Danticat

Monday 4/20: Workshop Fiction 2
Reading: “Once in a Lifetime” by Jhumpa Lahiri
Wednesday 4/22: Workshop Poetry 2
Readings: *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* pgs 59-83

Monday 4/27: Workshop Poetry 2
Readings: *The Carrying* pgs 3-25

Wednesday 4/29: Workshop Poetry 2/3 (when we finish the end of the second set of the class’s poems we will move directly into the third set)
Readings: *The Carrying* pgs. 26-47

Monday 5/4: Workshop Poetry 3
Readings: *The Carrying* pgs 48-69

Wednesday 5/6: Workshop Poetry 3
Readings: *The Carrying* pgs 70-91

Monday 5/11: Final portfolios due. Discussion on publishing.