

Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

CRWRI-UA.815.021

Tuesday and Thursday: 2 PM - 3:15 PM

Instructor: Sonia Feigelson

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This class is a brief introduction to Creative Writing as an artistic discipline. This means that you are here because you have an interest in writing and are hoping that I, along with your peers, can make you a better writer. Through workshop and craft analysis, we will work to differentiate between and experiment with the tools available to you in building your own text work.

Together, we will examine fiction, poetry, and hybrid texts that I believe can teach us something about how to tell a story, how to interrogate an idea, how to communicate, and how to listen.

This is not a literature class—we are taking off our good English student hats and monocles, and we are taking apart language to see how it works. We are figuring out how best to build our own narratives by learning about others'. A good writer is a good reader. A good reader is a good listener.

Class Structure:

The class itself will consist of two components: craft and workshop. In our craft discussions, we'll work together to dissect the day's reading material. Somewhere in each of these pieces of writing there's a valuable craft lesson waiting for us. In the pursuit of craft, we will also share in the joy, misery, embarrassment, and ecstasy of in class writing assignments and exercises.

In workshop, we will be working to create our own work, revising that work, and providing respectful and useful feedback to our classmates on their work. While we will discuss pieces with intellectual care, we will also adopt a kind and constructive Workshop etiquette.

You will be expected to turn in an annotated copy of the submitter's work on the day on their workshop, complete with a one page response note addressing what works and what doesn't work about the piece, as well as any areas of confusion. Feedback should be constructive. It should concern both what is exciting about the piece and how the piece as a whole can be improved. This exercise is not designed to discourage anyone. I encourage honesty and require all students to be respectful during workshop.

What you should Bring to Class:

Aside from total engagement? A notebook, hard copies of the pieces being workshopped and/or discussed during craft on that day, two copies of each response letter (one for the submitter and one you will turn in to me), a hard copy of any other assignments due that day, a writing implement, compassion, and maybe a bottle of water.

On the Thursday before you are workshopped (so, a week before your workshop), you should bring hard copies of your piece to class for distribution. You may not email your piece.

Workshop Piece Formatting:

All workshop writing will be typed, TNR, 12-pt font. Stories should be between 6-10 pages, double-spaced, and poems can be of any length, single-spaced. I encourage double-sided printing. Bring hard copies of each story or poem to workshop when it is your turn to distribute. All submissions must include your name as well as page numbers.

If you want to submit a chapter from a novel-in-progress, it must be the first chapter, and you must e-mail or come speak to me about it beforehand. If you would like to submit a series of flash pieces, that is probably fine, but email me to check anyway.

Writer's Notebook:

Buy one! In it, write two observations of any kind every day. So, fourteen observations a week. These will not be graded for quality, and if you don't want me to read them due to privacy, I will honor that. The only part of this that will affect your grade is whether you do them or not. The observations should be whatever you want them to be. For example:

Today I saw a half-litre of coke stuck in the barren flower pot outside of a restaurant.

I will collect these randomly throughout the semester to check in on you. You will not know when. They will count toward your participation grade.

Final Portfolio:

This class will not have a final exam, but on the last day of class you will turn in a final portfolio. This portfolio will consist of your revised pieces of writing, as well as your earlier drafts of that writing so that we can track the progress of these pieces. It will also include a brief written statement about your writing and your progress throughout the course.

Technology:

You don't need it unless you need it. The way I will know if you need it is that you will provide me with an official note detailing your special dispensation.

Attendance:

Especially in a workshop setting, it is vital for you to be present for every class. You're allowed one unexcused absence, after that each unexcused absence will lower your final grade by half a letter (A to A-, etc.) I understand that emergencies happen. If one does, just email me and we can talk on a case-by-case basis. Tardiness (arriving more than 10 minutes late) is also taken seriously. If you're tardy three times that counts as one unexcused absence. In a class like this,

where we are sharing and discussing personal work, being absent or tardy can be very disruptive and hinders the workshop environment. It's critical that we all take this seriously.

Plagiarism:

Please don't. You will fail.

Office Hours:

You are required to meet with me once over the course of the semester. If you want to meet with me more than once, that's great. I'm excited to see you there. Office hours will happen at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writer's House, at 58 West 10th Street, by appointment.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and participation	40%
Reading responses	30%
Final portfolio	30%

Extra Credit:

If you attend a reading throughout the semester and give me a 500-word response to it, I will award you extra credit. If you already have an A+ and you attend a reading anyway, you will simply become a more well-rounded human being.

Class Schedule:

TUESDAY 09/04: Introductions, Syllabus, Exercises

THURSDAY 09/06: The Sentence is a Lonely Place, by Gary Lutz; Christine Schutt; Rick Moody

TUESDAY 09/11: The Poetry of the Paragraph, by Gary Lutz; Audre Lorde

THURSDAY 09/13: The School, by Donald Barthelme; The Perfect Gerbil, by George Saunders

TUESDAY 09/18: Not Knowing, by Donald Barthelme; George Saunders

THURSDAY 09/20: Workshop Group 1

TUESDAY 09/25: Rebecca Schiff, Deb Olin Unferth

THURSDAY 09/27: Workshop Group 2

TUESDAY 10/02: Amy Hempel, Grace Paley

THURSDAY 10/04: Workshop Group 3

THURSDAY 10/11: Workshop Group 4

TUESDAY 10/16: You, Disappearing, by Alexandra Kleeman; Kelly Link

THURSDAY 10/18: Workshop Group 5

TUESDAY 10/23: The Glass Essay, by Anne Carson

THURSDAY 10/25: Workshop Group 6

TUESDAY 10/30: WS Merwin, Wislawa Szymborska, Elizabeth Bishop

THURSDAY 11/01: Workshop Group 1

TUESDAY 11/06: Maggie Nelson

THURSDAY 11/08: Workshop Group 2
TUESDAY 11/13: Ocean Vuong, Hanif Abdurraqib
THURSDAY 11/15: Workshop Group 3
TUESDAY 11/20: 448 Psychosis, by Sarah Kane
TUESDAY 11/27: Workshop Group 4
THURSDAY 11/29: Workshop Group 5
TUESDAY 12/04: Ross Gay, Sharon Olds
THURSDAY 12/06: Workshop Group 6
TUESDAY 12/11: TBD
THURSDAY 12/13: Closing Remarks