

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction & Poetry
CRWRI-UA.815.017
M & W: 9:30 – 10:45 AM
Location: TBA

Instructor: India Lena Gonzalez

Email: ilg245@nyu.edu

Emergency Contact: 202-441-1009

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00 – 12:30 PM, TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION: throughout this semester we will work together to identify the fundamentals of fiction and poetry. the main focus of this class is your writing. at the same time, every week i will assign reading so that we may discuss the technical aspects of creative writing. this will help improve your work as we start to identify the tools that all writers utilize. the reading list for this class features mostly contemporary authors who i believe are taking phenomenal risks with their work, so that you may be inspired to do the same. by the end of our time together all students will come out as strong readers, writers, and editors. this class will hopefully serve as a nurturing environment for you to explore all venues of your voice and become more finely attuned to it. i encourage you to be bold, to see what fails and what works. i am not looking for perfection or expertise, rather hard work and a writer who is willing to follow their truth.

CLASS STRUCTURE: the first half of the semester will be dedicated to fiction, the latter half to poetry.

MONDAYS will serve as craft sessions. prior to this class students should read the packets/books scheduled for that day. the objectives of these craft days are to take a critical look at the work you have been assigned and analyze in depth what is happening in these pieces, especially as it relates to the topic for the day. please come prepared with thoughts and specific passages that caught your eye so that you can contribute to the class discussion.

WEDNESDAYS mean workshop. throughout the semester every student will workshop two fiction pieces and two poems. more information below.

READING: for the fiction unit, packets for each class are available online at NYU Classes. please download, print, and read them week by week. for the poetry unit you will be assigned a book per week (don't worry, they are short), which have been ordered through the NYU Bookstore. they are also available at other bookstores in the city, such as the Strand, and Amazon, in case you encounter any difficulties.

WORKSHOP: fiction pieces should be between 5-15 pages (double-spaced, page numbers included). poems should be no longer than three pages max. the wednesday before you are being workshopped you will bring in 16 copies of your fiction piece/poem and pass them out at the end of class. additionally, students will bring in two copies of their typed-up critiques (double-spaced, one page) every week. one copy for the student you are critiquing and one for me. if you are absent for whatever reason, please have someone in the class serve as your

proxy. to repeat, all stories/poems and critiques must be printed and stapled before class. everything should be written in 12-point font with standard margins. emailing work is not an option.

IN-CLASS RECITATIONS: at the start of every craft class one student will recite either a poem or one paragraph of a story by memory. afterwards, you will hand out a copy of your text to the class (16 copies of your text should be printed and ready). a sign-up sheet will be passed around on the first day.

CONFERENCES: it is mandatory that students meet with me once during midterms, and at the end of the semester. it is also strongly recommended that you come to office hours as often as you would like. if you plan on doing this, please email me in advance so i know when to expect you. during midterms and finals i will send out an email to the class with time slots for conferences.

LITERARY EVENT: every student is required to attend at least one literary event. you must write a one page, single-spaced response and submit this along with your final portfolio at the end of the semester. i will share information on NYU literary events with you all at the beginning of the semester.

FINAL PORTFOLIO: this will contain a brief artistic statement (more on this later on in the semester), your literary event assignment, and your revised work, which includes one of your fiction pieces and both of your poems. at the end of each piece please include a brief note explaining your editing process.

GRADING:

30 % - workshop submissions/critiques

30 % - final portfolio

15 % - attendance

15 % - class participation

10 % - in-class recitation

NOTE ON ATTENDANCE: if you are absent, without having spoken to me prior, your grade will drop (i.e. what would have been an A- becomes a B+, a B+ will drop to a B, etc.). the same goes for tardiness; if you are late to class more than once, your grade will drop by the same increments. this is an intimate class setting where attendance is of the utmost importance. please arrive early/on time. if you are running late for whatever reason, reach out. email or text me so i am in the loop.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: computers, cell phones, ipads, etc. are not allowed in class as they are often used to surf the web and generally draw your attention away from being fully present.

PLAGIARISM POLICY: totally unacceptable. you will be reported to the department immediately. no exceptions.

BOOK LIST: (available through the NYU Bookstore)

Crush by Richard Siken

There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé by Morgan Parker

Humanimal by Bhanu Kapil

Engine Empire by Cathy Park Hong

Four Reincarnations by Max Ritvo

Tender Buttons by Gertrude Stein

NOTE ON CONTENT: the readings for this class are well thought out and include artistic expressions that may present difficult material. please keep an open mind with each packet and book you read.

SCHEDULE:

W September 5th

Introductions (review syllabus and workshop etiquette handout, get to know one another, create workshop groups & sign-up for the in-class recitation schedule)

M September 10th

Discuss: *Play and Theory of the Duende* by Federico García Lorca / *The Talent of the Room* by Michael Ventura / *How to Become a Writer* by Lorrie Moore

In-Class Recitation: _____

W September 12th

Discuss: *Politics and the English Language* by George Orwell / *Aesthetic Law and Artistic Mystery* by John Gardner / watch “Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories” in class (video)

FICTION UNIT COMMENCES

M September 17th

O, IF I COULD HOLLER

(play the part: desire & history of our characters)

Discuss: *The Blues I’m Playing* by Langston Hughes / *Don’t Kiss Me* by Lindsay Hunter

In-Class Recitation: _____

W September 19th

Fiction Workshop Group #1

M September 24th

SWEETIE, I’M NOT CRITICIZING

(play the part: point of view & how our characters talk)

Discuss: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* by Raymond Carver / *The Prussian Officer* by D.H. Lawrence

In-Class Recitation: _____

W September 26th
Fiction Workshop Group #2

M October 1st
LITTLE FEET! EYELIDS! EVEN WHISKERS! DECEASED
(plot & sub-plot: what, how, & when it happens)
Discuss: *Cold Little Bird* by Ben Marcus / *Emergency* by Denis Johnson
In-Class Recitation: _____

W October 3rd
Fiction Workshop Group #3

M October 8th
(fall recess, which means no class. enjoy!)

W October 10th
Fiction Workshop Group #1

M October 15th
DONT, DAN. OH, DONT. WHAT ARE YOU KILLING?
(theme: what we mean when we write)
Discuss: *Box Seat* by Jean Toomer / *Lady & The Nature of the Miracle* by Diane Williams
In-Class Recitation: _____

W October 17th
Fiction Workshop Group #2

M October 22nd
BIRD BYRD WAS WHAT THIS BOY WAS TO US. OR JUST PLAIN BIRD.
(tone: panache of the author)
Discuss: *DEAR BODY, DEAR TWIN* by Ananda Naima Gonzalez / *the Fish and the Not Fish* by Peter Markus (including special guest Ananda Naima Gonzalez!)
In-Class Recitation: _____
(midterm conferences this week)

W October 24th
Fiction Workshop Group #3
(midterm conferences this week)

POETRY UNIT COMMENCES

M October 29th
I'M BLEEDING, I'M NOT JUST MAKING CONVERSATION
(the pressure, the physicality of poetry)
Discuss: *Crush* by Richard Siken / watch an excerpt from "Eileen Myles Interview: A Poem Says 'I Want'" in class (video)

- In-Class Recitation: _____
- W October 31st
Poetry Workshop Group #1
- M November 5th
I DON'T KNOW WHEN I GOT SO PUNK ROCK
(the poetic voice: set off the whole band)
Discuss: *There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé* by Morgan Parker
In-Class Recitation: _____
- W November 7th
Poetry Workshop Group #2
- M November 12th
WE LICKED THE DICTIONARY OFF EACH OTHER'S FACES
(cross-genre & how we use multiple tongues)
Discuss: *Humanimal* by Bhanu Kapil
In-Class Recitation: _____
- W November 14th
Poetry Workshop Group #3
- M November 19th
WALK IT YOU ROTTEN CHEAT.
(vernacular & bad accents)
Discuss: *Engine Empire* by Cathy Park Hong
In-Class Recitation: _____
- W November 21st
(thanksgiving break, which means no class. enjoy!)
- M November 26th
AND IF A WHOLE LOT OF NOTHING HAPPENS TO YOU, MAXES, THAT'S PEACE. WHICH IS WHAT WE WANT. TRUST ME.
(how we talk about death & life, risk the sentimental)
Discuss: *Four Reincarnations* by Max Ritvo / watch Max read "Poem to My Litter" in class (animated video)
In-Class Recitation: _____
- W November 28th
Poetry Workshop Group #1
- M December 3rd
THE TEASING IS TENDER AND TRYING AND THOUGHTFUL.
(how to defamiliarize the familiar, experiment, & provoke)
Discuss: *Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein

In-Class Recitations: _____ & _____

W December 5th
Poetry Workshop Group #2

M December 10th
Poetry Workshop Group #3
In-Class Recitations: _____ & _____
(final conferences this week)

W December 12th
Final Portfolios due in class & Celebratory Reading (woohoo!)
(final conferences this week)