

CRWRI-UA.815.018
MW: 9:30 AM – 10:45AM

Instructor: Katie Rejsek
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Office Hours & Location: TBA

Syllabus

Objective:

In this class we will not only develop our writing and revision skills through writing exercises and workshop, but we will also explore the fluid boundaries of what writing can be and what it can accomplish with the goal of becoming better readers as well. This class is not intended as a survey of American, British, or any specific type of literature; readings, however, will draw primarily from the past 100 years. We will examine the role of writing in a current, present-day context. We will work under the assumption that good writing most often arises from significant engagement with other artistic mediums, cultural observations, and honest personal reflection, rather than received (historical) ideas of how poetry or prose should be written.

Outline:

We will start each class with a 5-10 minute generative writing exercise. Please come prepared to class with something to write with. Opportunities to (voluntarily) share will be afforded to any spare time at the end of the class period.

Mondays will be mainly devoted to poetry and Wednesdays will be mainly devoted to prose. Starting in October, we will workshop both genres for approximately an hour each class period.

Reading assignments will typically be due the following week on the day devoted to that genre. Online assignments are due 2 hours before class time unless noted otherwise. Due dates for all assignments are indicated on schedule. All work is to be typed.

Workshop:

All good art comes from a place of vulnerability and openness. While we will not discuss our personal problems, the workshop environment still has to be understood as a safe environment for everyone. In your work, violence of any form targeted at a peer will not be tolerated. You are allowed to be honest with your classmates but at the same time are expected to be empathetic, mature, and use your common sense whenever you offer constructive critiques.

Each student will be workshopped once for prose and twice for poetry. Prose workshops will run for approximately 30 minutes per person, and poetry workshops will run for approximately 15 minutes per person. You are to submit your pieces online to the class Google group one week before they are up for workshop.

Prose pieces should not exceed 25 pages, but please contact me if more space is needed. There is no page limit for poetry pieces, but be considerate of the 15 minute time limit.

“Quality” of writing will not be considered, rather, how much effort you exude drawing from our class discussions and readings.

Participation:

Feedback for your peers’ work is essential to creating a comfortable, reciprocal workshop environment, therefore 60% of your participation grade includes thoughtful responses to your colleagues’ pieces. Responses should be constructive and at least 200 words for poems, 400 words for prose. A copy of your critique is to be turned in each workshop both to the person being workshopped, and me.

20% of your participation grade requires you to schedule and attend at least one conference with me. Please bring either a poem, an excerpt from a story, or a question for discussion. A sign-up sheet for conferences will be shared via email. Additional conferences are strongly encouraged but not required.

The remaining 20% of your participation grade will be calculated based on in-class participation. You are expected to contribute to discussion each class. The use of electronics is strictly prohibited during our time together, and will strongly play into this portion of your participation grade.

Assignments:

New York City is filled with many amazing literary events often free to the public. You are required to attend at least one creative writing reading/performance (does not need to be NYU affiliated) and turn in a page long write-up on your thoughts about the event. Two additional write ups will be accepted for extra credit/make up for a missed assignment.

Other assignments should be submitted online. They will be primarily responses to the readings and/or interesting, generative writing exercises. An email will be sent out to the class detailing the specifications of each assignment at least 5 days before the assignment is due.

Attendance:

You are allowed two unexcused absences. Each subsequent absence will result in the lowering of your final grade by one step. (A- will decrease to a B+, B+ will decrease to a B) Failure to show up to your workshop day will result in an automatic 0 in participation.

Presentations:

Each student is required to give a 10-15 minute presentation on a subject that interests them (slam, screenwriting, particular writer, etc.) Students are to submit a proposal for their topic 2 weeks before their scheduled presentation.

Final Portfolio:

The final portfolio will consist of a 2-3 page artist's statement, revisions of all three of your workshop pieces, as well as one new piece. Your new piece can be poetry, prose, or a cross-genre work. There is no page limit.

Grading rubric:

10% Presentations

10% Final Portfolio

15% Attendance

15% Participation

20% Assignments

30% Workshop

Reading list: (additional texts will be provided)

Citizen –Claudia Rankine

Bluets –Maggie Nelson

Her Body & Other Parties –Carmen Maria Machado

The Elephant Vanishes –Haruki Murakami

Down the Rabbit Hole -Juan Pablo Villalobos

Schedule

- September 4 W** Syllabus, introductions, writing exercises
- Poetry reading assignment for 9.10-** Anais Duplan “The Room Is Not Cold & It Is Not Dark” & “On a Scale of 1-10 How Loving Do You Feel?”
Danez Smith – “Dinosaurs in the Hood” & “a note on the phone app that tells me how far I am from other men’s mouths”
- https://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/poetry/crossroads/own_words/Anais_Duplan/
<https://hyperallergic.com/222072/one-poem-by-anais-duplan/>
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/57585/dinosaurs-in-the-hood>
- Prose reading assignment for 9.12-** Juno Diaz “Alma”
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/12/24/alma>
- 10 M** Discussion on contemporary poetry: How to be a good reader of poetry.
- Reading assignment for 9.17 –** Sharon Olds “The Fear of Oneself” “After Making Love in Winter” & “The Poetry of the in-between”
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=34578>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=36723>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rrb_MK0lkkM
- 12 W** Discussion on contemporary prose: How to be a good reader of prose.
- Reading assignment for 9.19-** Kristen Roupenian “Cat Person”
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/cat-person>
- 17 M** Discussion on feminist poetic voices
- Reading assignment for 9.24 –** Poets “Poetic Forms,” Anthony Madrid “The Milk One,” Adrienne Rich “Late Ghazal,” Dorothy Parker “Fair Weather,” Terrance Hayes “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin”
- <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/collection/poetic-forms>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55449/the-milk-one>
<https://shenandoahliterary.org/blog/2012/01/late-ghazal-by-adrienne-rich/>
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/fair-weather/>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/143917/american-sonnet-for-my-past-and-future-assassin-598dc83c976f1>
- 19 W** Discussion on feminist prose voices, with guest speaker Claire Werkiser

Reading assignment for 9.26– Carmen Maria Machado “Inventory” & “Especially Heinous” from *Her Body and Other Parties*

24 M Discussion on form

Reading assignment for 10.1– Claudia Rankine *Citizen* parts I, III, IV, VII, and “Script for Public Fiction at Hammer Museum” (page 130)

26 W Discussion on form

Reading assignment for 10.3– Haruki Murakami “The Elephant Vanishes” & “The Little Green Monster” from *The Elephant Vanishes & Writer’s Digest “Sub-Genre Descriptions”*

<http://www.writersdigest.com/qp7-migration-all-articles/qp7-migration-fiction/genredescriptions>

October

1 M Discussion on cross-genre work

Reading assignment for 10.8– Maggie Nelson *Bluets* #1-33, #70-77, #81-104, #152-159, #183-200, #212-240

Patti Smith “the sheep lady from algiers” & “Horses and Hey Joe”

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50432/the-sheep-lady-from-algiers>

3 W Discussion on cross-genre work

Reading assignment for 10.10– Karen Russell, “The Bog Girl”

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/06/20/bog-girl-by-karen-russell>

8 M Discussion on lyric

Reading assignment for 10.15– Poetry Foundation “On Rhythm and Sound,” Kendrick Lamar “Humble,” & Nathaniel Mackey “Day After Day of the Dead”

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/90338/on-sound-and-rhythm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvTRZJ-4Eyl>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/76797/day-after-day-of-the-dead>

10 W Discussion on world-building

Reading assignment for 10.17 – LitHub “How to Write Full Formed Characters in Fiction,” & Miranda July “Something that Needs Nothing”

<https://lithub.com/how-to-write-fully-formed-characters-in-fiction/>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/09/18/something-that-needs-nothing>

- 15 M Discussion on rhythm/meter
- Reading assignment for 10.22**– Sam Sax “After My Boyfriend’s Drag Show” & “Hematology,” Melissa Lozada-Oliva “Ode to Brown Girls with Bangs” & “My Hair Stays on Your Pillow Like a Question Mark”
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKwd4_GcxTs
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/89331/hematology>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVUB-eUNJyU>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SEtHsVcObo>
- 17 W Discussion on character
- Workshop
- Reading assignment for 10.24**– Shirley Jackson “The Lottery” & Ernest Hemingway “Hills Like White Elephants”
- https://sites.middlebury.edu/individualandthesociety/files/2010/09/jackson_lottery.pdf
- <https://genius.com/Ernest-hemingway-hills-like-white-elephants-annotated>
- 22 M Discussion on spoken word with guest speaker Melissa Lozada-Oliva
- Reading assignment for 10.29**– Frank O’Hara “The Eyelid Has It’s Storms,” Sara Deniz-Akant “Eight Poems,” & Frank Bidart “The Second Hour of the Night”
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=26778>
- <https://pen.org/eight-poems-by-sara-deniz-akant/>
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/42318/the-third-hour-of-the-night>
- 24 W Discussion on dialogue
- Workshop
- Reading assignment for 10.31**- Electric Literature “NEW GENRES: Domestic Fabulism or Kansas with a Difference,” Lesley Nneka Arimah “Who Will Greet You at Home,” & Kelly Link “The Wrong Grave,”
- <https://electricliterature.com/new-genres-domestic-fabulism-or-kansas-with-a-difference-4d7b8cca27>
- <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/26/who-will-greet-you-at-home>
- <https://kellylink.net/books/pretty-monsters/the-wrong-grave>

- 29 M Discussion on abstraction
Workshop
- Reading assignment for 11.5**– Writer’s Digest “Best Opening Poetry Lines,” Sylvia Plath “Daddy” & “Mad Girl Love Song,” Eileen Myles “Peanut Butter” & “Prophecy,” Sofia Samatar “Selkie Stories are for Losers”
- <http://www.writersdigest.com/whats-new/best-opening-poetry-lines>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48999/daddy-56d22aafa45b2>
<https://allpoetry.com/Mad-Girl%27s-Love-Song>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54620/peanut-butter>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56629/prophecy>
<http://strangehorizons.com/fiction/selkie-stories-are-for-losers/>

- 31 W Discussion on suspense & fabulism
Workshop
- Reading assignment for 11.7**– Robyn Schiff “Dyed Carnations,” Yusef Komunyakaa “Reflections,” Mark Doty “Difference,” Roald Dahl “The Landlady,” & Margaret Atwood “Happy Endings”
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/57568/dyed-carnations>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47931/reflections-56d228c564901>
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44136/difference-56d2231d9f249>
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/landlady_text.pdf
<http://occonline.occ.cccd.edu/online/swells/Happy%20Endings.pdf>
<http://occonline.occ.cccd.edu/online/swells/Happy%20Endings.pdf>

- November 5 M Discussion on beginnings (poetry & prose)
Workshop
- Reading assignment for 11.12**– “Anne Carson reads from Short Talks,” M. NourbeSe Philip “Zong #1”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kj-47KxZRyY>
<http://www.webdelsol.com/Facture/poems/mnourbesephilip.htm>

- 7 W Discussion on endings (poetry & prose)
Workshop

	12	M	Discussion on constraint Workshop Student presentation
	14	W	Workshop Two student presentations
	19	M	Workshop Two student presentations Assignment: <i>Down the Rabbit Hole</i> by Juan Pablo Villalobos
	22	W	Thanksgiving Break
	26	M	Workshop Two student presentations
	28	W	Workshop Two student presentations
December	3	M	Workshop Two student presentations
	5	W	Workshop Two student presentations
	10	M	Workshop Two student presentations
	12	W	Final reading/class party Final Portfolios due to/on _____