

**CREATIVE WRITING:
Introduction to Fiction and Poetry**

**Fall 2018
CRWRI-UA.815.016
TR: 3:30 PM - 4:45 PM**

**Professor: Claire Werkiser
Email: cw1350@nyu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment**

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this course is to *generate*. We will participate in the art of writing as creators and critics, authors and readers. This semester will be a process of creative exploration and self-discovery, built upon the solid foundation of craft lectures and critical essays. Our readings will span a variety of genres, forms, and subjects, broadening your conceptions of what it means to be a “writer.” With readings that focus on people of color, queer, and marginalized voices, we will explore our responsibility as writers under the modern sociopolitical pressures and how those tensions work from a craft perspective. We will spend time questioning the stylistic choices made by these authors and then examine the choices that we make in our own work.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Our class will be split between the study of craft and the practice of workshop. We will approach writing from all sides, letting our analytical discussions inform our artistic work.

Craft

Tuesdays will be reserved for craft discussions. Please print and bring all reading materials to class. All readings should be annotated. We will practice “active reading” throughout the semester, but be reckless with your highlighter and pen. Mark anything that strikes you. This will make it much easier for you to bring up points of interest or confusion during class and will help you write your critical responses.

You will be required to write a brief response to our readings for each craft class. This response does not need to be lengthy (around one page). Write about what struck you, confused you, made you feel something. Where did you feel connected? Does this work remind you of anything? What is the piece trying to say? How does the author accomplish this (or not)? Please bring two hard copies to class.

Our class discussions will be guided by your lines of inquiry. I want to get at the root of what interests you as readers and as writers. Please come to class with three discussion questions concerning the assigned readings for the the day. Bring two copies; one for me, one for your notebook. These can be typed or printed (legibly!).

Workshop

Thursdays will be our workshop day. You will submit twice and must submit both prose and poetry during the course of our class; however, you may submit any combination of the two forms that you choose (Hybrid forms are also acceptable, but please email me before submitting). For many of you, this may be your first workshop experience or your first time trying creative writing entirely. Don’t worry! Write weird, write honest, write experimental, and write *hard*. We’re not looking for perfection, but we are looking for *effort*. Please proofread your submissions (more than once)!

Hard copies of workshop submissions will be due the Thursday before your workshop, so that everyone has a full week to digest the material. If you wish to submit poetry, you will be required to submit 2-3 poems per workshop, totalling no more than 10 pages in length. If you are submitting prose, submissions must be 8-15 pages in length. All submissions should be in a 12 point serif font and double spaced (unless the font/spacing are a creative component of your piece).

In addition to line-editing the hard copies of workshop submissions, you are required to write a letter for each student up for workshop. We will go over workshop etiquette more in class, but your letters should be thoughtful, critical, and kind. This is a symbiotic process. We can only improve by working together.

****A note on comments: Intolerant, rude, or patronizing comments are not acceptable. If you read or hear a comment during class, or if I feel a particular comment spoken in class is any of the aforementioned, the person responsible will be addressed with serious consequences.*

Freewriting

We will begin each class with 5-10 minutes of freewriting in our journals. I will provide a prompt, but you are also free to write whatever is on your mind. Our best writing comes from our obsessions. Unless otherwise specified, you may choose to write poetry or prose, whichever strikes you in the moment. There is only one rule: do not remove your pencil from the paper for the entire time. Please continue these at home until you reach about a page, or a natural end to the piece. These do not need to be polished works, but should be proofread for spelling and typos. Type up and hand in during the next Tuesday class.

Writer's Notebook

Content comes from observations, lived experiences, and sensory detail. You will each be given a notebook for this class. This notebook is not merely a vessel for lecture notes and the freewriting exercises we will be doing in class; rather, it should serve as a journal, a scrapbook, a place for those thoughts that sneak into your mind while on the subway or waiting in line at the grocery store. Write it all down. I will be collecting these notebooks a few times during the semester to check your progress, but otherwise these notebooks should go with you everywhere. You should aim to fill them by the semester's end.

ASSIGNMENTS

Workshop Submissions

Hard copies of workshop submissions are due the Thursday before your scheduled workshop date. Please bring enough copies for each student and the professor. Poetry submissions should contain 2-3 poems and be no longer than 10 pages. Prose submissions should be 8-15 pages in length.

Critical Responses

Critical responses to assigned readings are due every Tuesday. Please bring two hard copies to class. Critical responses should be approximately one page.

Freewriting Exercises

Please type up any freewriting exercises started in class and hand them in the following Tuesday. These should be approximately one page.

Discussion Questions

Three questions about the assigned craft readings are due every Tuesday. Please bring two copies to class. You may print these on a half sheet to save paper!

Critique Letters

Critique letters for each author are due every workshop. Please bring two hard copies of each of your letters to class. Critique letters should be approximately one page.

Mini-Workshop/Reading

At the end of the semester, you will prepare a short, 3-4 minute reading to deliver in class. You will participate in a mini-workshop in assigned groups to hone your piece before the reading. You will not need to write full workshop letters for this class, but please write down a few notes for each of the members of your group!

Final Portfolio

A revised portfolio of your workshop submissions, as well as an extended critical essay, will be due at the end of the semester. You will also have the opportunity to expand one of your critical responses into a personal essay.

GRADING

A total of 1,000 points is possible for this class.

Attendance 10% - 100 points

Engagement 30% - 300 points

This includes your written discussion questions, workshop critique letters, and contributions to class discussions.

Creative Work 40% - 400 points

This includes your critical responses, workshop submissions, in-class reading, and journal.

Final Portfolio 20% - 200 points

* Extra Credit - possible 10% - 100 points

New York is full of literary events, book launches, and readings, many of which are free and hosted at the Lillian Vernon Writers' House. You may receive up to 20 points of extra credit for any literary event attended. After the event, please

submit proof of attendance, as well as a brief typed page describing the event and your reflections.

You may also earn up to 50 points of extra credit by participating in a public reading in some way. This can be through volunteering, reading at an event yourself, or organizing a literary event of your own. After the event, please submit proof of participation (I would love to see a video of your readings!), as well as a brief typed page describing the event and your reflections.

You can earn a possible 100 points toward your final grade through any combination of these activities.

HOUSEKEEPING

Attendance

The success of this class is contingent upon your attendance. This is not a lecture class. You cannot “make up” the information missed just by getting a copy of another student’s notes. That being said, life is chaos. You may have two absences over the course of the semester. Only ONE can be unexcused (meaning no doctor’s note, etc) without penalty. “Unexcused” does NOT mean that you just don’t show up for class. If you will not be in class, email me BEFORE class begins. You are still responsible for all missed work. Please attach any assignments due that day as well. If you are absent on a workshop day, please email your critique letters to the respective students. You will also be assigned and given the contact information of another classmate in order to discuss any missed work. Unexcused absences will result in the loss of one full letter grade from your attendance grade. More than three absences will result in a full letter grade deduction. Missing a day in which you are to be workshopped will result in a 10% cut to your participation grade. If you know you will miss a day that you are scheduled to be workshopped, please contact me and we will reschedule.

Tardiness

We will be starting each class with a freewriting exercise, so arriving late is unacceptable. Two instances of tardiness (being more than ten minutes late to class) will be equated to one absence. If you are fifteen minutes late to class, it will be counted as an absence.

Materials

All assigned readings will be available online. Please print ALL readings and bring to class unless otherwise specified.

Content

This class is structured around creative expression and may include “adult” content.

Participation

The crux of this class is discussion. It is vital that you come to class having read the day’s assignments and ready to discuss them in a meaningful way. Everyone must speak every class in order to get a full participation grade for the day.

Technology

Please put all cell phones on silent and away for the duration of our class. Laptops will not be necessary unless specified on a certain day.

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 please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

726 Broadway, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10003-6675

Telephone: 212-998-4980

Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114

Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Student Wellness Policy

Unless we see explicit evidence in workshop that the speaker of a work is the writer themselves, we assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will likely prompt the instructor's attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting work, especially for workshop, that may be interpreted as such. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.

Plagiarism

This is a creative writing course, emphasis on "creative." To avoid getting kicked out of school, please familiarize yourself with the NYU Plagiarism Policy. (Here's a hint: it's zero tolerance.)

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

September 4 (T) – The Start of It All...

September 6 (Th) Form, Structure, and Rhythm

“Happy Endings,” Margaret Atwood
“69 Hidebound Opinions,” C.D. Wright
“Someone is Writing a Poem,” Adrienne Rich
“Why I Write,” George Orwell
“On Keeping a Notebook,” Joan Didion

September 11 (T) – Dialogue and Tone

“USA v Cuba,” Hanif Abdurraqib
“As Good As Anything,” Alice Notley
“i can't stay in the same room with that woman for five minutes,” Charles Bukowski
“Girl on Girl,” Diane Cook
“The Lottery,” Shirley Jackson
“Haida’s Story,” excerpt from *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, Haruki Murakami

September 13 (Th) – Creation of Character

“Diameter,” Michelle Y. Burke
“Artichoke,” Angélica Freitas
“Man and Wife,” Katie Chase
“Lawns,” Mona Simpson

September 18 (T) – Places and Pasts

“Write Til You Drop,” Annie Dillard
“Brokeback Mountain,” Annie Proulx
“Ordinary Time,” Tim Dlugos
“In the Dream,” Jenny Johnson
“Homosexuality,” Charif Shanahan
“I used to live here once,” Jean Rhys

September 20 (Th) – Workshop Group A

September 25 (T) – Voice

“Uncanny the Singing that Comes from Certain Husks,” Joy Williams
“A Cheater’s Guide to Love,” Junot Diaz
“Wants,” Grace Paley

“Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong,” Ocean Vuong
“If You Are Over Staying Woke,” Morgan Parker
“It Says What We All Think,” Elaine Equi

September 27 (Th) – Workshop Group B

October 2 (T) – Making the Senses Our Muses

“Hitting Budapest,” NoViolet Bulawayo
“The Torn-Up Road,” Richard Silken
Bluets, excerpts, Maggie Nelson

October 4 (Th) – Workshop Group C

*Students workshopping on the 11th hand in material today.

October 9 (T) – Fall Break, Monday classes will meet today.

October 11 (Th) – Workshop Group D

October 16 (T) – Repetition

“Inventory,” Carmen Maria Machado
“Saying Your Names,” Richard Silken
“Horror Story,” Carmen Maria Machado
“Wind, Water, Stone,” Octavio Paz
“Add-Water Instant Blues,” Robin Morgan
“Daddy,” Sylvia Plath

October 18 (Th) – Workshop Group E

October 23 (T) – Experimental Forms Workshop with Katie Rejsek

* Reading Assignments TBD

October 25 (Th) – Workshop Group A

October 30 (T) – Making Magic

“Fairy Tale is Form, Form is Fairy Tale,” Kate Bernheimer
“The Wereman,” “Werewolf Movies,” “Update on Werewolves,” Margaret Atwood
“The Rememberer,” Aimee Bender
“Sea Oak,” George Saunders
“Jealous Husband Returns in Form of Parrot,” Robert Olen Butler
“Gigantic mountains,” Brandon Scott Gorrell

November 1 (Th) – Workshop Group B

November 6 (T) – Slam Poetry with Melissa Lozada-Oliva

* Reading Assignments TBD

November 8 (Th) – Workshop Group C

November 13 (T) – Body of Work

“The Husband Stitch,” Carmen Maria Machado

“Venison,” Leah Naomi Green

“Barberism,” Terrance Hayes

“Harlem Sweeties,” Langston Hughes

“A powerful poem about what it feels like to be transgender,” TED Talk, Lee Mokobe

November 15 (Th) – Workshop Group D

November 20 (T) – Time and Tension

“Three a.m.,” Jill McDonough

“Before,” Ada Limon

“A Temporary Matter,” Jhumpa Lahiri

“Newborn Thrown in Trash and Dies,” John Edgar Wideman

“Pee On Water,” Rachel B. Glaser

November 22 (Th) – Thanksgiving Break. No class.

November 27 (T) - Family as Framework

“Man and Wife,” Katie Chase

“Letter to my Father,” Martin Espada

“A Little Closer to the Edge,” Ocean Vuong

“Light,” Lesley Nneka Arimah

November 29 (Th) – Workshop Group E

*Bring in copies of reading piece for assigned workshop group.

December 4 (T) – Technology & Literature

“I Love You But I’ve Chosen Darkness,” Claire Vaye Watkins

“The Feels of Love,” T Kira Madden

“Identity Politics,” Tayi Tibble

“Dinosaurs in the Hood,” Danez Smith

“Daylight Saving Time Flies Like an Instagram of a Weasel Riding a Woodpecker &

You Feel Everything Will Be Alright,” Regie Cabico
“A new obsession. How to get out,” Sandra Simonds

December 6 (Th) – Mini-Workshop of Reading Pieces

December 11 (T) - Sex, Love, and Other Drugs

“How to Write a Sex Scene,” Rebecca Schiff
“Sometimes I wish I felt the side effects,” Danez Smith
“Car Crash While Hitchhiking,” Denis Johnson
“On Alcohol,” sam sax
“A Primer for the Weird Small Loves,” Richard Silken
“Something That Needs Nothing,” Miranda July

December 13 (Th) – The Last Hurrah/Readings

“Write Like a M*****r,” Cheryl Strayed
“How to be a Writer,” Lorrie Moore

December 18 - (T) - Final Portfolio Due