won't you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

Lucille Clifton, “won’t you celebrate with me”

OVERVIEW
Welcome to the Introduction to Creative Writing! I am so thrilled to have you here. We are writers converging in a community of other writers, pursuing an exploration of artistry, craft, and language! In this class, we will take pride in our voice and craft while expanding the ideas of what writing really is, why we do it, and how we can come close to perfecting it.

MECHANICS OF OUR CLASS
In order for a creative writing class to run smoothly, students must be ready and willing to discuss the readings. This is a class upon which discussion will be our primary mode of communication.

So, how exactly does this class work?

TUESDAY will be devoted to the discussion of craft. We will go over your weekly 350-500 word responses, thoughts on essays, and the impact these readings have on your writing practice.
THURSDAY will be our day to workshop your creative work. At the beginning of our semester, each student will be placed into assigned workshop groups that will rotate weekly.

AS WRITERS, I expect you to give me original, fresh work that is informed by our readings, discussions, and in class prompts.

AS READERS, I expect you to provide your fellow writers with prompt feedback, impressions, and thoughts. In our class, a cold read is a bad read. You will be required to annotate your classmates’ work prior to their workshop session, and hand them hard copies of your comments. This is the only way we get better!

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
As disciples of the written word, we have the responsibility to hyper awareness of the impact of our language. Because we write, we are stewards of language, and the words we use must be meticulously curated and cared for. In this community, we will work hard to respect the other writers in the room. Issues with a classmate’s writing on the basis of personal disagreement will not be accepted as valid. We will respect each work as a piece of art, and critiques will be given on proficiency of craft and language.

PLAGIARISM - There will be a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism in my classroom. Work that is not your own is unacceptable and will result in a failing final grade as well as higher disciplinary action.

LATE WORK - Late work will not be accepted. Not only is turning in late work not beneficial for your own practice, but your classmates’ workshop days will be impacted as a consequence as well. In order for this class to run smooth, everyone has to be on their game.

DEVICES - Unless otherwise instructed, leave your electronic devices silenced and away for the duration of the class. All of your own work should be printed out.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION
You must attend every class on time. Showing up prepared, engaged, and willing to discuss the readings and assignments will earn you a good grade. I will not accept a passive presence in my class. If you feel unable to contribute in class discussions, I invite you to speak with me outside of class so we can figure something out. If, for some reason an emergency arises that causes you to miss class, please notify me via email.

YOUR WRITING
You will not be graded on the quality of your writing and class contributions, but the effort in which you place into them.
Before midnight on each **MONDAY**, I will expect one piece of fiction or poetry, and your written response to the work we are studying that week (350-500 words). In your weekly response, you should be able to show me that you not only read the work, but were able to engage with it. These assignments will aid our craft discussions and your understanding of your own writing.

**FINAL PORTFOLIO**

Your final portfolio is your opportunity to show me what you have taken from the class as a whole. While there is no definite rubric for your final portfolio, I expect to see your work progressing. Elements I consider when grading your final portfolio will depend on the risks you take, the edits in your work, and the general craft progression of the body of work you develop throughout the semester. Although I would love to see your work win awards, it is not imperative to earn a good grade in my class. Details on exactly what will be expected in your portfolio will be released in a separate document closer to the due date.

**GRADING BREAKDOWN**

To remind you all - grades will be administered not on the *quality* of your writing and class contributions, but the *effort* in which you place into them.

- Attendance & Participation (40%)
- Your Writing (30%)
- Final Portfolio (30%)

Extra Credit - Throughout the course of the semester, you will be given two choices to redeem one extra credit opportunity. **1.** Go to a literary event and write a 500 word reflection responding to the event. **2.** Visit an art museum and write a piece of creative writing from artwork in one of New York City’s many lovely museums. You must include a photo of you with the piece in order for the extra credit to count. You cannot turn in this creative writing to workshop.

**OUR SCHEDULE**

**WEEK ONE**

**TUESDAY** - First day of class! Introductions, expectations, and in class writing prompt (What compels you to write?)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DZ-Xukd9-o (Yusef Komunyakaa interview - advice to young poets)

**THURSDAY** - **PRACTICE WORKSHOP**

**WEEK TWO**
TUESDAY - What Defines Genre?
“We The Animals” Justin Torres
“Shitty First Drafts” Anne Lamott

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK THREE
TUESDAY - Character Development
“We The Animals” Justin Torres
“Square Toes and Icy Arms” Catherine Barnett

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK FOUR
TUESDAY - Craft Talk - Finding Inspiration, and Discovering The Practice
“Talent of The Room” Michael Ventura
“American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” Terrance Hayes
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhJWKIV720g)

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK FIVE
TUESDAY - Study of the Modern Fable
“A Cafecito Story” Julia Alvarez

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK SIX
TUESDAY - Finding Your Voice
“Voice” Michael J Bugeja
“My Brother at 3 A.M.” Natalie Diaz
“My Father’s Love Letters” Yusef Komunyakaa
“The Dragon” Brigit Pegeen Kelly
“The Contract Says: We’d Like the Conversation to be Bilingual” Ada Limon

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK SEVEN
TUESDAY - The Political Poem
“It’s not fitness, it’s a lifestyle” Nicole Sealey
“Pulled Over in Short Hills, NJ, 8:00 AM” Ross Gay
“Swamp Thing” Frank X Walker
“Bighearted” Frank X Walker
“jasper  texas  1998” Lucille Clifton
“alternate names for black boys” Danez Smith

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK EIGHT
TUESDAY - Capturing the Landscape
   “Spring” Ellen Bryant Voigt
   “Digging” Seamus Heaney
   “North, to Taos” Arthur Sze
   “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” Langston Hughes
   “Trout” Seamus Heaney
   “Line of Descent” Forrest Gander

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK NINE
TUESDAY - Introducing Form

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK TEN
TUESDAY - Exploring the Elegy
   “Elegy” Natasha Trethewey
   “Elegy for Smoking” Patrick Phillips
   “To Our Miscarried One, Age Thirty Now” Sharon Olds
   “Song” Brigit Pegeen Kelly
   “My Brother at 3 A.M.” Natalie Diaz

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK ELEVEN
TUESDAY

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK TWELVE
TUESDAY - Music of Line
   “We Real Cool” Gwendolyn Brooks

THURSDAY - WORKSHOP
WEEK THIRTEEN
TUESDAY -
    “Sonny’s Blues” James Baldwin
THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK FOURTEEN
TUESDAY - The Narrative Poem
    “Schooner Flight” Derek Walcott
    “Odyssey of Big Boy” Sterling A Brown
THURSDAY - WORKSHOP

WEEK FIFTEEN
TUESDAY - Final class! Hand in portfolios, read favorite poems, eat and be merry!
THURSDAY - WORKSHOP