

## Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Fall 2019  
CRWRI-UA 815  
MW: 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM  
Location TBD

Professor: Michele Filgate  
Email: mf3802@nyu.edu  
Office Hours: By Appointment

### **OBJECTIVE**

In this class, we'll look at different elements of craft in both poetry and fiction. The best way to become a writer is to read like a writer, so we'll read a diverse selection of authors and poets and spend a lot of time discussing why these pieces work. The main objective of this class is for you to gain experience as a writer, and that means workshopping original pieces and learning how to incorporate feedback from your peers and your professor. By the end of the semester, you'll complete a final portfolio and have a new appreciation for the written word.

### **COURSE STRUCTURE**

**Mondays** will be our craft days. You should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading listed under that date on this syllabus. (Make sure to bring a physical copy of the assigned reading to class. All of the readings will be available on NYU Classes.) We'll also use some of that time for in-class writing prompts.

**Wednesdays** will be our workshop days. Each student will have the opportunity to workshop 3 poems for their first submission, one short story for their second submission, and either poetry or fiction for their third submission.

### **SUBMISSIONS**

Short fiction should be between 8-12 pages double-spaced with size 12 font, Times New Roman. (Approximately 250 words per page.) Poetry submissions should be 3 poems at a time. Make sure to include a header or footer with your name and page numbers.

You should submit your work to the class by Thursday evening the week before your workshop. It's crucial that you submit your work on time. Your submissions can be uploaded via NYU Classes.

### **WORKSHOP RESPONSES**

You are responsible for writing a one page response for each student submission. This should be a typed, 250 word letter where you clearly outline what's working and what isn't working in the piece. Aim to be as specific as possible. Don't just say that you like the prose. What do you like about the prose? A certain image? The point of view? The character? What suggestions do you have for ways in which the writer can improve their work? You must print out the letter and bring two copies to class: one for the student and one for me.

## **FINAL PORTFOLIO**

At the end of the semester, you will submit a final portfolio that includes all of your workshop submissions, the feedback I gave you, and revised drafts. Your portfolio should include a 1-2 page letter about your revisions.

## **EXTRA CREDIT**

You can earn extra credit (10% added to your grade) by attending a reading at NYU or any other venue in NYC and writing a one page paper about the most interesting things you heard or learned. I encourage you to ask the author a craft question during the Q&A portion of the event.

## **GRADING**

**Attendance: 20%**  
**Participation: 30%**  
**Writing Assignments: 40%**  
**Revised Portfolio: 10%**  
**Extra Credit: 10%**

## **CLASS RULES**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is extremely important and counts toward your final grade. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late, it will count as an absence. You are permitted one unexcused absence. After that, each absence will lower your grade by ten percent. An excused absence is allowed with a doctor's note.

### **CELL PHONES/ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Cell phones, laptops, and all other electronic devices aren't allowed. Make sure to print copies of the assigned reading and workshop pieces that we will be discussing.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

You are required to meet with me at least once during the semester. (I recommend waiting until after your first workshop.) Email me to schedule an appointment.

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. Don't do it. If you're caught, you will fail this course.

### **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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, or at 726 Broadway (2nd floor) or at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

## **STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY**

Unless there is 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.

## **SCHEDULE**

(Please note that the schedule might change depending on our class discussions. You should read the assigned reading *before* the date where the readings are listed.)

### **Week One**

**September 4<sup>th</sup> (W)**

**First day of class/Introduction**

Lorrie Moore, "[How to Become A Writer](#)"

Louise Erdrich, "Advice to Myself"

Writing Prompt

### **Week Two**

**September 9<sup>th</sup> (M)**

**Craft: Inspiration**

Mary Ruefle, "[Lectures I Will Never Give](#)"

Alexander Chee, "[Annie Dillard and the Writing Life](#)"

**September 11<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Poetry Workshop 1

### **Week Three**

**September 16<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Sensory Details**

"[How to Eat Chicken Wings](#)" by Kristen Arnett

"[Bright Tide](#)" by Tess Taylor

"[Movie](#)" by Eileen Myles

"[Bees Were Better](#)" by Naomi Shihab Nye

**September 18<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Poetry Workshop 2

### **Week Four**

**September 23<sup>rd</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Concealing & Revealing**

"[As A Human Being](#)" by Jericho Brown

[“Mirrors at 4 a.m.”](#) by Charles Simic  
[Excerpt](#) from *Green Girl* by Kate Zambreno

**September 25<sup>th</sup> (W):**  
Poetry Workshop 3

**Week Five**

**September 30<sup>th</sup> (M):**  
**Craft: Desire**  
“Wants” by Grace Paley  
“Cat Person” by Kristen Roupenian  
[“The 17-Year-Old & the Gay Bar”](#) by Danez Smith

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> (W):**  
Poetry Workshop 4

**Week Six**

**October 7<sup>th</sup> (M):**  
**Craft: Writing About Family Members**  
[“Mothers”](#) by Nikki Giovanni  
“Dogs Go Wolf” by Lauren Groff  
“The First Day” by Edward P. Jones

**October 9<sup>th</sup> (W):**  
Fiction Workshop 1

**Week Seven**

**October 14<sup>th</sup>: Fall Recess. No class.**

**October 15<sup>th</sup> (T):**  
**Craft: Gender Identity and The Body**  
“The Husband Stitch” by Carmen Maria Machado  
[“Things Haunt”](#) by Joshua Jennifer Espinoza  
[“Changeling”](#) by Hieu Minh Nguyen

**October 16<sup>th</sup> (W):**  
Fiction Workshop 2

**Week Eight**

**October 21<sup>st</sup> (M):**  
**Craft: Conflict**  
“Brownies” by ZZ Packer  
“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid  
[“We Lived Happily During the War”](#) by Ilya Kaminsky

**October 23<sup>rd</sup> (W):**

Fiction Workshop 3

**Week Nine**

**October 28<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Ghosts, The Impossible, and Magic**

“The Specialist’s Hat” by Kelly Link

“The Ceiling” by Kevin Brockmeier

“[Belief in Magic](#)” by Dean Young

**October 30<sup>th</sup> (W)**

Fiction Workshop 4

**Week Ten**

**November 4<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Setting**

“[Chinatown Diptych](#)” by Jenny Xie

“[Those Winter Sundays](#)” by Robert Hayden

“A Good Man is Hard To Find” by Flannery O’Connor

**November 6<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Workshop 1

**Week Eleven**

**November 11<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Characters**

“An Honest Woman” by Ottessa Moshfegh

“[Sticks](#)” by George Saunders

“[Five Short Stories](#)” by Lydia Davis

“[A Woman With No Legs](#)” by Natalie Diaz

**November 13<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Workshop 2

**Week Twelve**

**November 18<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: The Light & The Shadow**

“[Sorrow Is Not My Name](#)” by Ross Gay

“[Failing and Flying](#)” by Jack Gilbert

“The Knowers” by Helen Phillips

**November 20<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Workshop 3

**Week Thirteen**

**November 25<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Dialogue**

“The Child” by Ali Smith

“In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried” by Amy Hempel

**November 27<sup>th</sup> (W): No class (Thanksgiving break)**

**Week Fourteen**

**December 2<sup>nd</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Intensity**

“The Tomb of Wrestling” by Jo Ann Beard

“[The Universe as Primal Scream](#)” by Tracy K. Smith

“[Late Summer after a Panic Attack](#)” by Ada Limón

**December 4<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Workshop 4

**Week Fifteen**

**December 9<sup>th</sup> (M):**

**Craft: Final Craft Class**

“[The Secret](#)” by Denise Levertov

“Hitting Budapest” NoViolet Bulawayo

**December 11<sup>th</sup> (W):**

Last Class/Guest Speaker

Final Portfolio is Due