like painters or sculptors, writers methodically create something from nothing as they seek to fill a space that was once empty or amorphous. As with any artistic medium, writing too can be felt and engaged with more deeply by unpacking its formal and thematic elements, to uncover the cogs turning in any piece of poetry or prose. In this course, we will be examining our own work and the work of others to discern how these stylistic decisions can generate and build upon meaning. We'll learn a comprehensive vocabulary that will help us discuss our own writings and the writings of our peers in an effective, productive way. By maintaining our daily image journals and participating in in-class generative exercises, we will build a writing practice that will sustain us for years to come. In an atmosphere of mutual support, experimentation and trust, we’ll work to untangle the abstractions of poetry and fiction into something more tangible and tender, something we can get our arms around. Course readings will foreground queer, POC, and non-binary writers that have been historically excluded from the literary canon.

Course Objectives
- To generate a vocabulary to evaluate and identify formal and thematic elements
- To produce thoughtful poetry and prose that earnestly depicts our voice and sensibilities
- To provide effective feedback for our peers and their work
- To consider how stylistic decisions inform meaning

Required Text(s)
Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric, Claudia Rankine (Graywolf, 2014)
Nepantla: An Anthology for Queer Poets of Color (Nightboat Books, 2018)

Course Readings
All other course readings will be made available through NYU Classes or handed out during class.

Supplies
A journal or notebook, separate from your image journal, for note-taking.
A folder or three ring binder to keep all handouts and materials — by the end of the semester, you’ll have your own anthology of fiction and poetry.

**Meat & Potatoes**

In this course, our focus will be split into two sections, poetry first and fiction second. We will spend several classes interacting with texts that might fall in-between these distinctions, discussing more nebulous or hybrid forms like the lyric essay, prose-poems, graphic novels, etc. Wednesdays will be dedicated to workshopping and Mondays to craft, with the exception of the last two weeks in which we will be exclusively workshopping. Workshops will be divided into two groups. If your group is up for workshop that week, you will be turning in a draft (with enough copies for everyone) the Monday before your Wednesday workshop so that we will have time to sit with your writing. Regardless of which group you are in, you will be required to turn in a draft every Monday — if you’re not scheduled to be workshopped, you only need to bring one copy for me.

For the first week of our poetry section and, later, our fiction section, we will spend a considerable amount of time acclimating ourselves with a critical vocabulary, formal terminologies and effective methods for unpacking the medium at hand.

Each student will be expected to enter our class sessions with an open heart and curious mind, to contribute meaningfully to class discussions, to provide thoughtful critiques for the work of your peers, to maintain your image journal with care, and to turn in drafts for workshop. You will also be turning in written responses (Reading Responses) to the assigned “craft” essays as well as typed up critiques for workshop submissions.

At the end of the semester, you’ll assemble a Chapbook that will hold all your revised final drafts.

- **Reading Responses**
  On Mondays, you will be required to turn in a brief writing assignment (5 - 7 sentences) that respond to several questions I will prompt you with, to help guide your reading, at the end of the day on Wednesdays. This will help inform a productive discussion of the reading, whether it is an essay on craft or assigned poems or stories.

- **Workshop Submissions**
  Regardless of whether or not your group is up for workshop that week, you will be turning in a draft of a poem or a story every Monday. Workshops will be held on Wednesdays, but your drafts need to be turned in on Monday. This way, we’ll have time to engage with your draft
and formulate in-depth commentary. This means that you will be required to write approximately 5 poems and an extended story draft over the course of the semester. If it’s preferable, you could instead turn in drafts of 3 separate short stories. Poems can be of any length or genre (barring a specific writing assignment, like sonnets) and stories can be anywhere from 10 to 15 pages — if you’re going to go the route of 3 shorter stories, the final products must total 10 to 15 pages in aggregate, not individually. You will be provided with prompts but will not be necessarily beholden to them.

- **Annotating for Workshop**
  We will go over more explicit expectations for the written feedback we will provide to our peers but you will be required to mark up the text that will be workshopped that day, prior to the workshop, and be ready to share insightful comments. We want to give each text the attention and care it deserves.

- **Image Journal**
  Please come to every class with your image journal in hand. In this journal, we will observe and record several images per day. These journals will help you locate inspiration in your day-to-day life, mundane or otherwise, and these observations will act as entry points into in-class writing exercises. I will have you turn them in or share them in class periodically. Think of this as more of a meditational practice than an assignment.

**Workshop Etiquette & Best Practices**
A workshop cannot be successful if there is not a mutually agreed upon atmosphere of trust, support and respect. We will be sharing ourselves and our stories with each other and that can be a very vulnerable-making act. We will consider our classmates work with the same respectful tones that we would want our own work considered. We will be sure to always refer to the narrator of the poem or story as “the speaker” and never the author’s name.

**Poetry Reading Attendance**
In New York, you almost have to go out of your way to avoid literary readings. You will be required to attend two readings over the course of the semester and to type of a brief (2 paragraph) review of your experience there. I will be sure to give you a heads up on upcoming events but you’re welcome to research your own.

**Absences & Tardiness**
Don’t do it. But if you must, please let me know well ahead of time. More than two unexplained absences will result in a 10% deduction from your final grade. Chronic tardiness will not be tolerated but I am a reasonable person and understand that trains happen.

**Conferences**
Students are required to meet with me during office hours (or by appointment) at least twice during the semester. Our first meeting should take place during the first three weeks so I can gain a better understanding of your voice, aspirations, and how I can best support you.

**Plagiarism**
NYU has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism for both academic papers and creative pieces. All occasions of plagiarism will be reported directly to the department, without exception. That said, you are welcome (and encouraged) to reference the work of others or turn in work that is in direct conversation with another piece. I only ask that you reference or make note of this ahead of time. For a more thorough overview of NYU’s policies on academic integrity, please consult: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity)

**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](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.

**Grading**
Class Participation & Conferences: 10%
Peer Responses: 15%
Reading Responses: 25%
Drafts: 25%
Final Revised Portfolios: 25%

**Course Schedule**
*Subject to change with notice*

**Week 1**
*Welcome!*

(M) **Sep 2nd**
NO CLASS

(W) **Sep 4th**
Get-to-know-you-type exercises
Review syllabus and other logistics
Message in a Bottle (Essay) — Ed Hirsch

**Week 2**
*Ars Poetica*

(M) **Sep 9th**
*Art of Daring: Risks, Restlessness and Imagination* (Selections) — Carl Philips
For The Sake Of People’s Poetry (Essay) — June Jordan
“won’t you celebrate with me” — Lucille Clifton
“Essay On Craft” — Ocean Vuong
*Junk* (Excerpt) — Tommy Pico

(W) **Sep 11th**
Mock workshop — bring in your favorite poem!
Week 3
Forms Inform Meaning

(M) Sep 16th

*Why Write in Form?* (Essay) — Rebecca Hazleton  
Selections from *Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* — Terrance Hayes  
Selections from *Bijoux in the Dark* — John Yau  
In-class writing meditation (pantoums)

(W) Sep 18th

Group 1 Workshop

Week 4
Metatextual: Syntax and Structure

(M) Sep 23rd

Muscularity & Eros — Carl Phillips  
Selections from *Nature Poem* — Tommy Pico  
“Self Portrait” — Erika L. Sanchez  
“Elegy With My Mother’s Lipstick” — Paul Tran  
“thirst” — Franny Choi

(W) Sep 25th

Group 2 Workshop

Week 5
Sonic Landscapes

(M) Sep 30th

*Simulacra* (Selections) — Airea D. Matthews  
*The Same Different* (Selections) — Hannah Sanghee Park  
*Jelly Roll* (Selections) — Kevin Young  
In-class writing meditation (soundboard)

(W) Oct 2
NO CLASS

**Week 6**

_Lyricism — “These Songs are not meant to be understood, you understand”_

(M) **Oct 7th**

Radiant Lyre: Essays on Lyric Poetry (Excerpt) — David Baker & Ann Townsend
Bright Dead Things (Selections) — Ada Limón
“Catching Copper” — Natalie Diaz
“On Grace” — Danez Smith

(W) **Oct 9th**

Group 1 Workshop

**Week 6**

_Line as Unit_

(M) **Oct 14th**

NO CLASS (Fall Recess)

(W) **Oct 16th**

Selections from Versed — Rae Armantrout
Selections from Black Acre — Monica Youn
In-class writing meditation
Group 2 Workshop

**Week 7**

_Liminal Spaces & In-Between-ness in Genre (Else Otherwise)_

(M) **Oct 21st**

Selections from Agua Viva — Clarice Lispector
Selections from Don’t Let Me Be Lonely — Claudia Rankine
Excerpt from Fun Home — Alison Bechdel

(W) **Oct 23rd**

Group 1 Workshop
Week 8  
*Narrative Arc: Dipping Below the Axis*

(M) Oct 28th  
Reeling for the Empire — Karen Russell  
Bloodchild — Octavia Butler  
The Loss of All Lost Things (Selections) — Amina Gautier

(W) Oct 30th  
Group 2 Workshop

Week 9  
*Plot Diagramming*

(M) Nov 4th  
Selections from Grand Union — Zadie Smith  
Selections from Birds of America — Lorrie Moore  
In-class writing meditation (draft diagram)

(W) Nov 6th  
Group 1 Workshop

Week 10  
*Memoire & Memory*

(M) Nov 11th  
“Phone Home” (*When the Sick Rule the World*) — Dodie Bellamy  
Excerpts from *Speak, Memory* — Vladimir Nabokov  
In-class writing meditation (split open a memory)

(W) Nov 13th  
Group 2 Workshop

Week 11  
*Writing Into & Out of the Subconscious*
(M) Nov 18th

4th Person Singular — Nuar Al-Sadir
Selections from Speedboat — Renata Adler
In-class writing meditation (stream of consciousness)

(W) Nov 20th

Group 1 Workshop

Week 12
Shouting into the void

(M) Nov 25th

NO CLASS

(W) Nov 27th

NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Recess)

Week 13
Flow & Momentum →

(M) Dec 2nd

Girl — Jamaica Kincaid
Can’t & Won’t (Stories) (Selections) — Lydia Davis
Leaving the Atocha Station (Excerpt) — Ben Lerner

(W) Dec 4th

Group 1 & 2 Workshop

Week 14
At the end of my suffering, there was a door...

(M) Dec 9th

Group 1 & 2 Workshop

(W) Dec 11th
Chapbooks due
Potluck!
Dramatic reading showcase