

Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.012

Meeting Times: TR 12:30pm – 1:45

Location: TBA

Instructor: Hannah Kingsley-Ma

Contact: hannahkma@gmail.com

Office Hours: By Appointment

OVERVIEW:

This is a creative writing course in which we will be discussing the craft elements of both fiction and poetry. We will be reading contemporary works from the last century and freeing ourselves from the limited binary of “liking it” or “not liking it.” Instead we will ask ourselves what is working within the piece, and what specific tactics the author is using to convey a mood, feeling, or idea. We will be thinking a lot about tone and voice in this class — wondering what makes a piece feel assured, or intimate, or challenging. Our enthusiasm for reading will inform our discussions. We will settle into the practice of reading as writers and apply those skills to reading each other’s work with great care and scrutiny.

CLASS STRUCTURE:

Craft

On Tuesdays we will discuss assigned works from a craft perspective. We will alternate between discussing fiction and poetry, but not both on the same day. Students are to submit a **one-page “reading diary” entry** responding to the works assigned for that day. Please email those to me the night before class and bring a printed version for yourself. These journals can be informal, and a genuine expression of how you engaged with the work. Maybe this means you include what lines particularly stood out to you, or what bothered you about the text, or what lessons the piece has to teach you in terms of craft that you’ll borrow in your own work. Please be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.

Workshop

On Thursdays we will be workshopping student submitted work. This is a process that requires a common understanding of trust. It is a brave thing to submit your work to be read, and subsequently there is much responsibility in discussing that work thoughtfully and constructively. We’ll talk more about the etiquette of workshop in class, but it’s always important to remember that we are here to be helpful to the writer — and in doing so, we become *much* better readers. We are not judging these works on the basis of our own taste. We are identifying what in a text is effective and compelling, and extrapolating on how to bring the writer’s vision into greater focus. Everyone is expected to participate in these discussions, and I will call on people at random to ensure that they do.

Students will be workshopped three times — once for poetry, once for fiction, and then a third for whatever the writer chooses. The page limit for poetry is 3-6 pages, the page limit for fiction is 10-20. Submissions should be double spaced, size 12 font, and include page numbers. You will submit your work one week prior to workshop and bring enough copies for everyone in class.

You are expected to provide line edits on each submission, plus a **letter of feedback** addressed to the author. Please bring **two copies** of this letter to class on Thursday — one for me, and one for the author. This letter is an opportunity for you to tell the writer what you admire in their work, and what you think could be working better.

I think it's important for us to feel comfortable as a group speaking up when we find that the text has sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist language in it, and I encourage anyone to speak to me privately if there's something you want to talk about and don't feel free to bring up in class discussions.

GRADING

Attendance and participation 40%
Reading Responses 30%
Final Portfolio 30% (this will contain your revised work)

Attendance

You have to come to class. Two unexcused absences will result in a full letter reduction of your grade.

Participation

I cannot stress this enough — it is paramount that everyone in this class participate. It's a discussion-based class that lives and dies by the varied offerings each one of us has to bring. This is not going to be an intimidating space where there is a "right" or "wrong" thing to say. This is the great joy of reading and writing — we all do it differently. That's why I want so badly to hear from you.

Rules!

There will be no electronics permitted in this class.

Plagiarism

Is explicitly disallowed. Plagiarism will be reported and result in a failing grade.

Office Hours:

Each student is required to see me at least once during the semester to talk about their progress in the class. Please email me to make an appointment.

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 my attention. Please send me 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, please reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness

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.

READING LIST

Reference

Why Poetry by Matthew Zapruder (we will read this book throughout the duration of the semester so I recommend purchasing it)

Poetry

They Said It Couldn't Be Done – Natalie Shapero
For Grace, After a Party – Frank O'Hara
Lana Turner is Dead – Frank O'Hara
The Best of It – Kay Ryan
From "summer, somewhere" – Danez Smith
Saguaros – Javier Zamora
Zuihitsu – Jenny Xie
One Art – Elizabeth Bishop
from Junk – Tommy Pico
If You Are Over Staying Woke – Morgan Parker
The Snow Man – Wallace Stevens
Love Sonnet IV – Pablo Neruda
Kitchenette Building – Gwendolyn Brooks

Fiction

Emergency – Dennis Johnson
The Husband Stitch – Carmen Maria Machado
The Sepmplica Girl-Diaries – George Saunders
How to be a Writer – Lorrie Moore

A Manual for Cleaning Women – Lucia Berlin

Whatever Happened to Interracial Love – Kathleen Collins