Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.012
Meeting Times: TR 12:30pm – 1:45
Location: BOBS_LL148
Instructor: Hannah Kingsley-Ma
Contact: hkm261@nyu.edu
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 writer 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

We will discuss assigned works from a craft perspective. 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

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.

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 10-15. 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 writer. Please email me a copy of this letter and bring one to class for the writer. 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.

Prejudice and bigoted language will not be tolerated in the classroom. 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 during class discussion.

**GRADING**

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

**Attendance**

Two unexcused absences will result in a half a 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 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.

**A Note About the Texts**

I’ll provide PDFs for most of the stories and poems we will read. The one book I will ask you to acquire is *Why Poetry* by Matthew Zapruder, which we will use as a reference throughout our poetry unit.

**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:**
Students are encouraged to meet with me at least twice to discuss their progress in this class. Generally, it is helpful to arrange a meeting after you’ve been workshopped, especially if you want to talk about your work in greater detail. Please make an appointment with me through email.

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.

Week One

Tuesday, September 3rd
Introductions + Workshop Etiquette + Workshop Sign-Ups

Thursday, September 5th
Craft of Fiction – Point of View
“How to be a Writer” — Lorrie Moore, Self-Help
“What is Seized” — Lorrie Moore, Self-Help
“Point of View” — Lucia Berlin, A Manual for Cleaning Women
GROUP 1 DISTRIBUTES STORIES

Week Two

Tuesday, September 10th
Craft of Fiction — Sense of Place
“Dr. H. A. Moynihan” — Lucia Berlin, A Manual for Cleaning Women

Thursday, September 12th
Workshop Group 1
GROUP 2 DISTRIBUTES STORIES

Week Three
Tuesday, September 17th
Craft of Fiction – Voice
“The School” – Donald Bartheleme
“The Semplica-Girl Diaries” – George Saunders, 10th of December

Thursday, September 19th
Workshop Group 2 stories
GROUP 3 SUBMITS STORIES

Week Four

Tuesday, September 24th
Craft of Fiction — Structure
“What Happened to Interracial Love” — Kathleen Collins, Whatever Happened to Interracial Love
“Exteriors” — Kathleen Collins, Whatever Happened to Interracial Love
“Interiors” — Kathleen Collins, Whatever Happened to Interracial Love

Thursday, September 26th
Workshop Group 3
GROUP 4 SUBMIT STORIES

Week Five

Tuesday, October 1st
Craft of Fiction — Reinventing pre-existing stories
“The Husband’s Stitch” — Carmen Maria Machado, Her Body and Other Stories
“Especially Heinous: 272 Views of Law and Order SVU” — Carmen Maria Machado, Her Body and Other Stories

October 3rd
Workshop Group 4
GROUP 5 SUBMIT STORIES

Week 6

Tuesday, October 8th
Craft of Fiction — Unreliable Narrators
“Emergency” – Denis Johnson, Jesus’ Son
“Roy Spivey” — Miranda July

Thursday, October 10th
Workshop Group 5
Week 7

Tuesday, October 15th
No Classes Monday Schedule

Thursday, October 17th
Craft of Poetry — How to Read a Poem
Introduction + Three Beginnings and the Machine of Poetry + Literalists of the Imagination – Matthew Zapruder, Why Poetry (Chapters 1 + 2)
“The Snow Man” – Wallace Stevens
“They Said It Couldn’t be Done” – Natalie Shapero

GROUP 1 DISTRIBUTES POEMS

Week 8

Tuesday October 22nd
Workshop Group 1 Poems
GROUP 2 DISTRIBUTES POEMS

Thursday October 24th
Craft of Poetry – Form
Some Thoughts on Form and Why I Rhyme – Matthew Zapruder, Why Poetry (Chapter 5)
“One Art” — Elizabeth Bishop
“If You are Over Staying Woke” — Morgan Parker

Week 9

Tuesday, October 29th
Workshop Group 2 Poems
GROUP 3 DISTRIBUTES POEMS

Thursday, October 31st
Craft of Poetry — Voice
“Poem [Lana Turner Has Collapsed!]” — Frank O’Hara
“For Grace, After a Party” — Frank O’Hara
“from Junk” — Tommy Pico

Week 10

Tuesday, November 5th
Workshop Group 3 Poems
GROUP 4 DISTRIBUTES POEMS
Thursday, November 7th
Craft of Poetry — Image
Dream Meaning – Matthew Zapruder, Why Poetry, Chapter 9
“Zuihitsu” — Jenny Xie
“Saguaro” — Javier Zamora
“kitchenette building” — Gwendolyn Brooks

Week 11

Tuesday, November 12th
Workshop Group 4
GROUP 5 DISTRIBUTES POEMS

Thursday, November 14th
Craft of Poetry — Sound
From “summer, somewhere” — Danez Smith
“Sharks’ Teeth” — Kay Ryan

Week 12

Tuesday, November 19th
Workshop Group 5
GROUP 1 DISTRIBUTES GENRE OF THEIR CHOICE

Thursday, November 21st
Craft of Poetry — Poetry and Prose
“Don’t Bother the Earth Spirit” – Joy Harjo
Excerpt of Citizen: An American Lyric — Claudia Rankine

Week 13

Tuesday, November 26th
Workshop Group 1
GROUP 2 DISTRIBUTES GENRE OF THEIR CHOICE

Thursday, November 28th
Thanksgiving — No Class

Week 14

Tuesday, December 2nd
Workshop Group 2
GROUP 3 DISTRIBUTES GENRE OF THEIR CHOICE

Thursday, December 4th
Workshop Group 3
*GROUP 4 DISTRIBUTE GENRE OF THEIR CHOICE*

**Week 15**

**Tuesday, December 10**
Workshop Group 5
*GROUP 5 DISTRIBUTE GENRE OF THEIR CHOICE*

**Thursday, December 12**
Workshop Group 5

*Please submit your completed portfolio to me by Tuesday, December 17*