

## **Creative Writing: Introduction to Poetry and Fiction**

Fall 2019

CRWRI-UA.815.017

M/W: 9:30- 10:45 AM

Professor: Lucy Powell

Email: LP1987@nyu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

### **Course overview**

Welcome to Introduction to Creative Writing! Have you ever asked yourself why you liked a certain poem, book, TV show, or movie? This course aims to answer that question by exploring what makes poetry and fiction work, and to bring that into your own writing. We will also examine how authors incorporate aspects of their personal lives onto the page. For the first half of the semester, we will focus on craft readings and in-class writing prompts, and then we will switch to student workshops for the second half of the semester. At the end of the semester, you should have developed sharpened reading skills and a solid foundation for your own writing.

### **Structure**

#### **Craft**

For the first portion of the semester we will focus on poetry and fiction craft readings, with in-class writing assignments. You must print out and mark up each assigned reading and bring them to class. Mark anything: what you liked, what you didn't like, what confused you, what moved you. I will also ask that for each reading, you come prepared with your favorite (or least favorite) sentence or line, with your reasons why. Mondays will be for poetry, Wednesdays will be for fiction.

I am going to divide you into four groups in our first class. These groups will determine our workshop schedule for the second half of the semester, but for the first half they will

dictate presentations on each class's reading. Each group will present twice during the semester on a rotation— everyone will get to present on fiction and poetry. These presentations will guide our class for that day and should be about 15-20 minutes before opening up to class discussion. You can and should bring in additional materials- interviews with the author, for example.

## Workshop

During workshop, we center our discussion around student work. Each student will submit three times over the course of the semester: once in fiction, once in poetry, and then once in a form of your choosing.

Please do not be intimidated by workshop! The goal is not to impress each other (or me), but rather to make yourself vulnerable on the page and really go for it. Please give yourselves permission to mess up, writing something weird, and be imperfect. Be *bold!* With that in mind, however, I expect for you to proofread your work prior to submitting it. This is not an excuse to give it less than 100%. If you have multiple typos or poor grammar, your workshop grade will be deducted.

You are to submit hard copies of your workshop submissions a full week prior to your workshop date. If you are being workshopped on a Monday, your work is due in class the previous Monday. Please print 16 copies (one for each student, and one for me) to distribute. Your work should be **stapled, paginated, and with your name on it**. If you absolutely must email your submission due to extenuating circumstances, please let me

know. Otherwise, late/emailed submissions will result in a reduction to your workshop grade.

Each student should line-edit the hard copies of submissions they are given and come prepared to discuss each work in class. You will turn in the marked-up work back to the student author. You are also to write a letter for each student author to turn into them on their workshop date. Please print two copies of the letters- one for the student author and one for me. Failure to turn in a letter will result in the reduction of your workshop grade. We will go over what a critique letter should be like in class. I fully expect that each letter will be thoughtful, insightful, and kind. Rude or intolerant comments will be taken very seriously. It is a top priority for me as the workshop facilitator to ensure that this space is comfortable.

Please note that due to our schedule, there is a tight turnaround for workshopping. I encourage you to begin writing as soon as our class starts because once we start workshops, you will have a very short amount of time to turn in new work!

## **Written Assignments**

### Workshop submissions

Hard copies of workshop submissions are due a week before your scheduled workshop date. You should print out enough copies for each student and me. All assignments, poetry and fiction, should be in a 12 pt. serif font (i.e., Times New Roman) with double

spacing (unless for stylistic purposes). For a poetry submission, please submit at least 2-3 poems— this should be 8-10 pages. For fiction, please submit 8-15 pages.

### Critique letters

These are due every workshop for each author being critiqued. Please print out one for the student author and one for me. Each letter should be about a page. If an author submits 3 poems, your letter should address each poem.

### Writing exercises

We will do some in-class writing assignments and some take-home assignments. You will also be keeping a journal in this class, and at the beginning of each class I will ask us to discuss things we've written in our journals. This is to encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open. Did you see anything weird on the subway? Did you listen to a song that evoked a certain emotion? Write it all down. You are not turning in your journal unless you choose to do the extra credit assignment, but what you write in your journal will inform our class discussions.

### Final portfolio

A final portfolio is due at the end of the semester. You have two options for this— both are challenging in their own ways.

Option 1: Significantly revise *all three* of your workshop submissions with a detailed note for each one explaining what you've changed and why. I also encourage you to explain why you chose *not* to change certain things.

Option 2: Significantly revise *one* of your workshop submissions (your choice of which), write a personal non-fiction essay on a topic of your choosing, and write a critical response essay about one of our assigned readings from the first half of the semester.

Please note that the total length for both options should be the same: you are expected to turn in at least 24 pages for your final portfolio.

## **Grading**

Attendance – 10%

You are allowed two unexcused absences. Each further unexcused absence will result in your attendance grade being reduced 20%. If you are more than ten minutes late to class with no excuse I will count you as absent.

Class Participation – 30%

This includes participation in class discussion and your group presentations. You are expected to participate in each class in a meaningful way.

Creative Work – 40%

You are not being graded on the *quality* of your writing. Nobody expects you to be Shakespeare or J.K. Rowling. This is about your level of commitment, care, and dedication to improving your craft. Included in this portion of your grade are your workshop submissions, critique letters, and extra writing assignments.

Final Portfolio – 20%

Extra Credit – 10%

You can earn **up to 10% extra** for an extra credit assignment. There are a couple of options for this. In order to get the full 10%, you'll have to complete both options.

Option 1: Attend a literary event. There are many you can choose from, whether they are NYU sponsored or not. Please include proof of your attendance and a 1-2 paged typed response to your experience. I expect you to be able to research how to attend an event, but if you do need help please let me know.

Option 2: Please type up and turn in **two** of your journal entries along with two pieces of flash fiction or poetry (about 3-5 pages) inspired by something in the journal entries. Please include a brief synopsis of what inspired you from these journal entries.

## **Classroom policies**

### Attendance

Your attendance is critical for this class to succeed. Without you, we can't have a real discussion. You are permitted two unexcused absences, but what that means is you must email me prior to missing class to let me know why you will not be there. If you do not email me to let me know, this will result in a reduction of your final grade. You are still responsible for any work due that day, please include as an email attachment.

### In class participation

Each student is expected to participate in each class discussion. Class discussion is imperative for this class structure. If you want to get a full participation grade, you must speak in each class and add value to the discussion.

#### Required Materials

You will need a designated notebook for this class. I will ensure all readings are available to you online, but you will be responsible for printing.

#### Technology

No technology is permitted in class unless you are using it for your presentation. If you are caught using your phone or other technology in class, this will result in a drop in your participation grade.

#### Office hours

I encourage you to use office hours. Ideally, you should come after you've been workshopped so we can discuss your experience.

#### Plagiarism

Plagiarism won't be tolerated and will be reported.

#### Issues of discomfort

If something in an assignment has made you uncomfortable, please email me to let me know. It is important to me to keep this workshop a safe and welcoming environment. With that in mind, if I feel that a workshop piece is inappropriate in terms of depictions of racism, sexism, homophobia, assault, or violence, I will address this and take this very seriously. Of course, these issues can and in fact *should* be written about, the difference is if the end result is threatening or if the intent is to get a rise out of the class.

## **Additional information**

### 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 also please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities.

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

726 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

New York, NY 10003-6675

Telephone: 212-998-4980

Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114

Website: <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.

### **Provisional schedule & assigned authors- subject to change!**

**W 9/4-** Beyonce's birthday, first day of class, introductions, ice breakers, go over syllabus & divide class into groups

**M 9/9-** Joe Wenderoth

**W 9/11-** Lorrie Moore – Group 1 presenting

**M 9/16-** Ocean Vuong - Group 2 presenting

**W 9/18-** Jumpha Lahiri – Group 3 presenting

**M 9/23-** Pablo Neruda - Group 4 presenting

**W 9/25-** David Barthelme

**M 9/30-** Audre Lorde- Group 1 presenting

**W 10/2-** Edward P Jones – Group 2 presenting

**M 10/7-** Allen Ginsberg- Group 3 presenting

**W 10/9-** Jamaica Kincaid- Group 4 presenting

**M 10/14-** **NO CLASS!**

**W 10/16-** Michael Chabon

**M 10/21-** Elizabeth Avecedo, Marilyn Chin

**W 10/23-** Joy Williams, Alissa Nutting

**M 10/28-** Workshops begin! Workshop group 1 (poetry)

**W 10/30-** Workshop group 2 (poetry)

**M 11/4-** Workshop group 3 (poetry)

**W 11/6-** Workshop group 4 (poetry)

**M 11/11-** Rotation 2! Workshop group 1 (fiction)

**W 11/13-** Workshop group 2 (fiction)

**M 11/18-** Workshop group 3 (fiction)

**W 11/20-** Workshop group 4 (fiction)

**M 11/25-** Rotation 3! Workshop group 1 (author's choice!)

**W 11/27- NO CLASS!**

**M 12/2-** Workshop group 2 (author's choice!)

**W 12/4-** Workshop group 3 (author's choice!)

**M 12/9 –** Workshop group 4 (author's choice!)

**W 12/11- LAST CLASS ☹ Celebratory reading & party ☺**