

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Fall 2019

Section number: CRWRI-UA.815.008

Schedule: TR: 2 PM - 3:15 PM

Instructor: Peter Neeley

Email: pn890@nyu.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

In this class, we will focus on becoming writers of stories and worlds through different forms. Part of this will entail building skills that help us read work with greater depth, clarity, and structural awareness. The first part of the course will be oriented to fiction, the second part will focus on poetry, and the middle two weeks will look at work that is less so one or the other. We will spend time working on generating ideas, stories, and feelings that you want to write about, and strategies for the different ways that can be done. My goal is for you to leave the class with a sense of possibility for your voice as a writer, in what you say and how you say it.

Structure

Typically, we will talk about readings on Tuesdays and have workshop on Thursday. You will be split into three groups for workshop. Everyone will have two prose pieces, one shorter and one longer, and three poems or sets of short poems workshopped over the course of the semester. All work should be 12 point font and double-spaced, unless it is a deliberate stylistic choice by the writer not to. The shorter prose piece should be about three pages, and the longer piece about twelve. The poem or poems should be three to five pages.

On alternating weeks, I will also have groups not bringing in writing for workshop turn in an assignment to me, which I will provide feedback on. I want this class to be generative, and to get to know your work better and give you additional feedback on your writing outside of when you are workshopped. I highly encourage everyone to buy a notebook for the class and make good use of it.

Readings and responses will be due the day that they are listed. Students whose work we will discuss in workshop are expected to bring in printed copies of their piece for each member of the class and me **one week before** workshop. I expect all students to read, take notes, and type up a one page written response for workshop the following Thursday.

When the reading assigned is selections or no link is provided, the materials will be on the NYU course site. The readings are designed to be examples of the many ways content and craft have a relationship to one another. Students should approach them as such, and responses should reflect that. I will also sometimes post additional suggested reading, such as essays or interviews that are relevant to the week's reading.

Grading

Attendance and participation (40%)

I will expect you to be in class promptly. If you are more than 15 minutes late I will consider it an absence. Each absence after your first two will result in an automatic 1/3 letter grade decrease (A to A-). An absence will be excused only with outside documentation. Laptops will not be allowed on workshop days, and are only to be used for the purposes of reviewing course materials on other days. I expect all students to meet with me at least once, preferably before the midterm assignment is due, and more as you'd like.

Participation encompasses how you engage in the classroom, including being active in meaningful classroom discussion about what we are looking at that day, and listening to your peers and paying close attention. I realize that participation varies depending on the person, and I am happy to have conversations with individuals if you're concerned about it. I will also encourage students to try different ways of engaging with each other and the material.

Responses and Writing Assignments (30%)

A reflection on the assigned readings will be due the day we are set to discuss them. I will expect one full page, 12-point font double-spaced. This can include notes on craft, content, and other elements. You might look at one how the form is constructed, or a recurring detail. You might take a broader view, or think of ideas for writing prompts based on the reading. You might also talk about the feelings it brought up.

Also included in this portion of your grade is meeting the expectation that you bring in printed copies for the class on the day you are expected to, and turning in the additional writings assigned on an alternating schedule.

Midterm revision and reflection (10%)

On October 22, you will turn in an initial set of five pages of revised writing, and a one-page reflection on the how your experience has been so far in the writing process, workshop, revision, and lessons learned.

Final portfolio and reflection (20%)

This will include 20 pages of thoroughly revised work, preferably a mix of prose and poetry, though I leave that to your discretion. It will also include a two-page reflection about your work over the course of the semester and your development in writing.

Extra Credit Opportunities (5% possible)

Part of this class is about learning to be writers in community with one another. Students are encouraged to go to literary (broad definition) events in New York, and can earn extra credit by reporting back on one they've been to by writing or verbally to me in office hours.

Conduct and expectations

I expect us all to treat each other with respect and compassion. I will not tolerate any harassment, or discriminatory behavior or language. On the first day, I will facilitate a discussion to create a set of agreements and expectations. I expect that we approach each person and their work with care and sensitivity, while also maintaining a critical eye. I want students to come out of this course with a better understanding of themselves as readers, writers, and people in the world, and what it means to participate in a community of writers.

I'm invested in your growth as writers and in your ability to have a critical lens for your own and other people's work. Part of the value of taking the time to write responses to the readings and to the work of your peers is to sit with it, and reflect on what it is trying to do. My hope is that you can identify linguistic, formal, and narrative techniques from other writers that you can incorporate into your own work. I also want you to use these skills to approach what is coming to workshop in a way that helps pieces become a better expression of what you see them attempting to do.

Required Materials

I will upload scans or provide links to all materials aside from the following books:

The Hour of the Star, Clarice Lispector

Bluets, Maggie Nelson

Don't Let Me Be Lonely, Claudia Rankine

Academic Integrity

All the work you submit must be your own. Remember, New York University has a strict no-tolerance policy when it comes to plagiarism. If there is any indication that the work you submit is not original, it will be reported to a higher academic authority and disciplinary

measures will be taken. If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism, please see the Academic Integrity for Students at NYU.

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>

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings other than the required texts are subject to change based on our conversations and the interests of the class.

Week 1

September 3

-Introductions and questions, workshop group assignments

September 5

Read: -Handouts on Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process

-Selected essays from Alexander Chee, *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*

Due: Workshop group 1 bring in copies for the class.

Week 2

September 10

Read: - Lorrie Moore, "How to Become a Writer" (<http://www.sfuadcnf.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/How-to-Become-a-Writer-Lorrie-Moore.pdf>)

-Ted Chiang, "The Story of Your Life" (<http://www.kameli.net/~raimu/rnd/ted-chiang-story-of-your-life-2000.pdf>)

September 12

Due: Workshop group 2 bring in copies for the class.

Week 3

September 17

Read: -James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues"

-Carson McCullers, "A Court in the West Eighties"

September 19

Due: Workshop group 3 bring in copies for the class. Groups 1 and 2 bring in a piece of flash fiction (up to two pages), suggestion to make it about New York.

Week 4

September 24

Read: -Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*

September 26

Due: Workshop group 1 bring in copies for the class.

Week 5

Tuesday, October 1

Read: -Carmen Maria Machado, “The Husband Stitch”

-Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery”

Thursday, October 3

Due: Workshop group 2 bring in copies for the class. Groups 1 and 3 bring in a piece of flash fiction (up to two pages), suggestion to make it fantastical.

Week 6

October 8

Read: Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

October 10

Due: Workshop group 3 bring in copies for the class.

Week 7

October 15

NO CLASS, Legislative Day

October 17

Due: Workshop group 1 bring in copies for the class. Groups 2 and 3 bring in a piece of flash fiction (up to two pages), suggestion to make it hybrid.

Week 8

October 22

Due: Midterm reflection. We will spend some time reflecting on our time in the class so far. Find a short poem from someone else (up to 2 pages) to read aloud in class.

October 24

Due: Workshop group 2 bring in copies for the class.

Week 9

October 29

Read: Claudia Rankine, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*

October 31

Due: Workshop group 3 bring in copies for the class. Groups 1 and 2 bring in a piece of work (up to two pages), suggestion to use research to inform it.

Week 10

November 5

Read: Selections from Sharon Olds, Yusef Komunyakaa, Frank O'Hara, Gwendolyn Brooks

November 7

Due: Workshop group 1 bring in copies for the class.

Week 11

November 12

Read: Selected poems from Eileen Myles, Terrance Hayes, Ada Limón, Carl Phillips

November 14

Due: Workshop group 2 bring in copies for the class. Groups 1 and 3 bring in a poem, suggestion to make it narrative and/or lyric "I" driven.

Week 12

November 19

Read: Selected poems from Natasha Trethewey, Anne Carson, Arthur Sze, Richard Siken

November 21

Due: Workshop group 3 bring in copies for the class.

Week 13

November 26

Read: Lyn Hejinian, "The Rejection of Closure"

(<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69401/the-rejection-of-closure>)

- Solmaz Sharif, “The Near Transitive Properties of the Political and Poetical: Erasure” (<http://www.thevolta.org/ewc28-ssharif-p1.html>) and “The Master’s House” (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/146216/the-masters-house>)

- Also, bring in three writing prompts based on the readings so far.

November 28

NO CLASS, Thanksgiving

Week 14

December 3

Read: Selected poems from Morgan Parker, Ocean Vuong, Khadija Queen, Ilya Kaminsky

December 5

Final workshop. Groups 2 and 3 bring in a poetic sequence (up to 6 short sections).

Week 15

December 10

Student readings and reflections

December 12

Due: Final portfolio and we’ll celebrate