Introduction to Poetry & Fiction Writing, Spring 2018
T TR 8:00-9:15AM
Office hours T 9:30-11:00AM and by appointment
Marney Rathbun
marneyrathbun@gmail.com

This introductory course to poetry and fiction aims to explore texts that negotiate selfhood, world-making, and the many myths of self-actualization via writing as praxis. This is a discussion based course, focused on seven short contemporary texts of poetry, fiction, and first-person non fiction. Questions we’ll explore from the outset: what are the numerous modes of writing presented in these texts? What are the distinct and peculiar services offered by poetry, fiction, and the first-person essay? How can we enter texts structurally, and support narrative claims and responses via what’s presented on the page? And finally, how are texts sites of spatial and temporal rupture?

This class aims to directly engage the queer, non-white subject as the only subject — texts presented disparate from this lens will be re-negotiated and understood through it. We will be interested in the ways subjectivity arises through structure, how identity names and renames itself, and the many ways interiority can be written and announced. Out of this study will stem our own creative practice. Workshopped pieces will be written and inspired by our textual study. Each student is welcome and encouraged to write in their preferred form. Work students desire to workshop that has not been written in response to class can be discussed during office hours.

I am committed to a learning environment that is accessible and that enables everyone’s complete participation. If you have a documented disability or think you may have one and as a result, need accommodations to complete requirements, do not hesitate to contact me, or to have a representative from Health Services contact me.

**Required Texts**
Lucille Clifton *Blessing the Boats*
Danez Smith *Don’t Call Us Dead: Poems*
Spencer Reece *The Clerk’s Tale*
Han Kang *The Vegetarian*
Deborah Levy *Hot Milk*
James Baldwin *Giovanni’s Room*
Assignments
Class participation 25%
Workshop feedback 25%
Response papers 25%
Final portfolio 25%

Class Participation
All participants of class are required to read texts in their entirety, and come prepared with three text-related questions per craft class. Each student is asked to memorize and recite a poem of their choosing once per semester. This will be factored in as class participation.

Workshop Feedback
We will workshop on Thursdays. Each student will workshop once every two weeks. Students are required to bring copies of their workshop piece on the Thursday preceding their week.
Feedback will be handwritten commentary on each piece. Original comments will be returned to the author, and a second copy will be handed in to me on the day of workshop.

Response papers
There will be two analytical papers over the course of the semester, each 4-6 pages in length. These are opportunities to connect three texts we’ve studied in class to a structural or theoretical study we’ve discussed. They are opportunities to present your best and most precise thinking – they need not be “excellent” by any other standard than they present a wholeness and attention to the work at hand.

Final portfolio
Portfolios will consist of five carefully edited pieces workshopped over the course of the semester. We will present them on the last day of class in celebration of our work together.

Attendance
Attendance is mandatory unless you have contacted me. Three unexcused absences will result in a grade demarcation. If it is your day to workshop, attendance is particularly crucial.

Schedule
Jan. 23
Lucille Clifton “won’t you celebrate with me”
Rumi “Quietness”
Alain Badiou In Praise of Love excerpt
Stevie Nicks video
Myth and play as formal practice
Jan. 25
Jericho Brown “Again”
Natasha Tretheway “Myth”
Lucille Clifton Blessing the Boats
Invitation as formal practice & world-making

Jan. 30
Cornelius Eady “I Know (I’m Losing You)”
The Temptations “I’m Losing You”
Clifton Blessing the Boats
“Brothers”

Feb. 1
Recitation
Workshop Group A

Feb. 6
Shakespeare Sonnets 13-20
Terrance Hayes “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin”
Robert Haydn “Those Winter Sundays”
Danez Smith, Don’t Call Us Dead: Poems

Feb. 8
Recitation
Workshop Group B

Feb. 13
Audre Lorde “Uses of the Erotic”
Lynn Emanuel “Frying Trout While Drunk”
Smith Don’t Call Us Dead
“Mail”

Feb. 15
Recitation
Workshop Group A

Feb. 20
Class cancelled
Spencer Reece The Clerk’s Tale

Feb. 22
Diane Gilliam Fisher “Pearlie Tells What Happened at School”
Joy Harjo “Becoming Seventy”
Spencer Reece The Clerk’s Tale

Feb. 27
Recitation
Workshop Group B
Mar. 1
Recitation
Workshop Group A

Mar. 6
Beyoncé “Lemonade” excerpt
Claudia Rankine *Citizen* excerpt
Han Kang *The Vegetarian*
Subjectivity as collage & rupture

Mar. 8
Rilke “You Who Never Arrived”
Recitation
Workshop Group B
*First response paper due Mar. 9 at midnight
Spring Recess

Mar. 20
Aracelis Girmay “Here”
Emily Dickinson “466”
Kang *The Vegetarian*

Mar. 22
Recitation
Workshop Group A

Mar. 27
Miranda July “The Metal Bowl”
ZZ Packer “Drinking Coffee Elswhere”
Deborah Levy *Hot Milk*
Interrogating confessionalism

Mar. 29
Recitation
Workshop Group B

Apr. 3
Junot Diaz *Drown* excerpt
Roxane Gay “Not Here to Make Friends”
Gwendolyn Brooks “the mother”
Levy *Hot Milk*
Unlikeability as world making & reform

Apr. 5
Recitation
Workshop Group A
Apr. 10
Toni Morrison “Playing in the Dark”
Essex Hemphill *Ceremonies* excerpt
James Baldwin *Giovanni’s Room*

Apr. 12
Recitation
Workshop Group B

Apr. 17
Phillip Levine “What Work Is”
Baldwin *Giovanni’s Room*

Apr. 19
Recitation
Workshop Group A

Apr. 24
Maggie Nelson *Bluets* excerpt
Elizabeth Alexander *The Light of the World* excerpt
Martin Buber “I & Thou”
First-person essay as encounter, beginnings as mythics

Apr. 26
Recitation
Workshop Group B

May 1
Yo-Yo Ma, Ennio Morricone “Gabriel’s Oboe”
Miles Davis “Blue in Green”
Jamaica Kincaid *My Brother* excerpt I
Clifton “lucifer speaks in his own voice”

May 3
Kincaid *My Brother* excerpt II
Marie Howe “The Gate”
Yusef Lateef “The Lotus Blossom”
Presentation of final portfolios & final paper theses

*Final papers due May 15 at midnight*