Creative Writing: Intro to Fiction and Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA 815.003
When we meet: M/W 8:00-9:15am
Where we meet: BOBS 836

Instructor: Megan Swenson
Email: mns389@nyu.edu
Phone: (480) 287-3284
Office hours: by appointment

::Required texts::
The Autobiography of Red—Anne Carson
Course packet

::In General:: This class will focus on the basics of writing and revising stories and poems. We will focus on fiction for the first half of the semester and poetry for the second half. This is not a literature class. We will be reading as writers, meaning that we will not be analyzing texts for their meaning necessarily, but for the ways in which they function successfully as pieces of writing. We will:
- identify formal qualities in works of fiction and poetry
- analyze how those formal choices serve or undermine the work
- build a vocabulary to discuss stories and poems productively
- engage seriously with our own and others’ work
- provide rigorous, compassionate, and respectful feedback

::Electronics:: Unless I ask you to bring videos or music to class to supplement our discussion, please keep your phones and laptops put away during class. Come to class as present and distraction-free as possible.

::Plagiarism:: The University's plagiarism policy is strict and the penalties severe. Just don’t do it. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department and disciplinary action will be taken, without exception.

::Class:: Mondays we will focus on craft and Wednesdays we will focus on workshop. Craft lessons will involve in-depth discussions of the assigned readings and occasional in-class writing assignments. Students are required to submit reading responses to me via email no later than 9:00pm on Sunday of each week. These responses are intended as both evidence to me that students have done the readings and as preparation for classroom discussion. In these reading responses, students will include a paragraph or two giving their general impressions of the readings and will provide 5 quoted sentences they liked and why, as well as at least one sentence they disliked and why.

::Workshop:: As creative writing students it is crucial to experience critique in a workshop setting, meaning your fellow students will read and respond to your work, including a response note that they will attach to the story/poem and return back to you after you have been workshopped. This exercise is not designed to discourage anyone. I encourage honesty and require all students to be respectful during workshop. Each student is responsible for bringing hard copies of their workshop submissions to class for distribution the Wednesday before their workshop. You may not email your work.

::Attendance:: Attendance is expected at every class meeting. More than two unexcused absences will result in a 10% decrease in a student’s final grade. If a student is absent during their workshop it will result in a failing grade. Absences owing to a medial or other emergency circumstance shall be accompanied by an official note.

::Office Hours:: Students are required to meet with me once during the semester.
::Assignments:: All work will be typed. Stories should be between 6-10 pages, double-spaced, and poems can be of any length, single-spaced. Bring at least 16 hard copies of each story or poem to workshop when it is your turn to distribute.

::Grading::
Attendance and participation 40%
Reading responses 30%
Final portfolio 30%

::The Deets::
M 1/22: Welcome! Intros, syllabus, set workshop schedule
W 1/24: Zadie Smith and Lorrie Moore essays
M 1/29: Jhumpa Lahiri
W 1/31: Workshop 1 & next week’s students submit
M 2/5: George Saunders
W 2/7: Workshop 2 & next week’s students submit
M 2/12: Denis Johnson
W 2/14: Workshop 3 & next week’s students submit
M 2/19: NO CLASS
W 2/21: Workshop 4 & next week’s students submit
M 2/26: Flannery O’Connor, Ernest Hemingway
W 2/28: Workshop 5 & next week’s students submit
M 3/5: Vladimir Nabokov
W 3/7: Workshop 6
M 3/12: NO CLASS
W 3/14: NO CLASS
M 3/19: Anne Carson
W 3/21: Workshop 7 & next week’s students submit
M 3/26: Allen Ginsberg
W 3/28: Workshop 1 & next week’s students submit
M 4/2: Gertrude Stein
W 4/4: Workshop 2 & next week’s students submit
M 4/9: Claudia Rankine
W 4/11: Workshop 3 & next week’s students submit
M 4/16: T.S. Elliot, Robert Creeley
W 4/18: Workshop 4 & next week’s students submit
M 4/23: Emily Dickinson (4/30 workshop students submit)
W 4/25: Workshop 5 & next week’s students submit
M 4/30: Workshop 6
W 5/2: Workshop 7
M 5/7: Last day business, portfolios due!

Your final portfolio will consist of two revised short stories and six revised poems. It will also include the first drafts of these stories and poems. It will be turned in in a folder.