

Creative Writing Introduction to Fiction & Poetry

CRWRI-UA 815, Section 015

TTH 3:30-4:45, Spring 2019

Location: 7 E. 12th St, Rm 134

Instructor: Elizabeth Dubois

Email: maryelizabethdubois@gmail.com

Office hours: by appointment

Course Overview:

In this class, we will both explore contemporary literature from a craft perspective, as well as write and workshop your own stories and poems.

Required Texts:

Life on Mars by Tracy K. Smith

Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror by John Ashbery

Speedboat by Renata Adler

Distant Star by Roberto Bolaño

Ancillary assigned short fiction and poems that will be made available on NYU classes (you are expected to print these and bring them to class)

Class Structure:

Our Tuesdays will be devoted to discussing the required texts from a “craft” perspective. In class, you will be expected to have done the reading, and come prepared with a brief typed and printed response to the assigned work. You will hand in these responses to me at the end of class.

On Thursdays we will workshop your own stories and poems. Over the course of the semester, everyone will workshop two stories and three poems. When it’s your turn to submit your writing for workshop, you will be required to print out individual copies for the entire class and hand these out a week before your assigned workshop date. Additionally, for each person that we workshop, you will write and print two copies of your critique letter addressed to that person. You will give one letter to the person being workshopped, and one to me.

The Craft Response (due on Tuesdays):

These responses should be one page max. The purpose of these is not to write a cohesive essay on the assigned reading; the idea is that they will help focus your critical/affective thoughts on what we read before class, and help guide our discussion. Some ideas on what to write in these: technical things you noticed (enjambment, free associative discourse, a colloquial register), a specific poem in the collection that really stood out to you and why, a particular character in the novel who felt underdeveloped, a theme that seemed too familiar and overdone, a cliché that really bothered you, a cliché that you loved and want to defend, etc. Be honest with yourself! If you hated it, let me know why.

The Letter (due on Thursdays):

These letters to your peers are meant to be encouraging glosses of your response to their work. I like to think of them as though you’re having a conversation with a friend: if someone you admire wrote this story or poem, what would you say to them about what you liked and didn’t like? It’s important to both applaud the merits of the piece, as well as offer productive suggestions.

Grading:

Attendance and participation	40%
Weekly responses and letters	30%
Final portfolio	30%

Attendance and lateness:

Since this is a discussion-based class, it's absolutely imperative that you attend every class and be on time. More than two absences will result in a full letter reduction of your grade.

Electronics in class:

We all have rotted Internet brains, but let's not bring that into class. Discussions and workshops only work if we're all fully present. Electronic devices must be silent and out of sight.

Schedule:

Week One	Tuesday, 1/27 Introduction and logistics, sign up for workshop, look at Federico Garcia Lorca's, "Ballad of the Moon Moon" and Adrienne Rich's "Spring Thunder," "Focus," and "Like This Together." Thursday, 1/29 Reading: Audre Lorde's, "Poetry is Not A Luxury" and "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." Meghan O'Rourke's, "Sun in Days." Group A distributes poems.
Week Two	Tuesday, 2/3 Reading: Tracy K Smith's <i>Life on Mars</i> . Thursday, 2/5 Workshop Group A. Group B distributes poems.
Week Three	Tuesday, 2/10 Reading: Sylvia Plath's, "The Moon and the Yew Tree" and "A Birthday Present." Morgan Parker's, "Afro," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Untitled while listening to Drake." Thursday, 2/12 Workshop Group B. Group C distributes poems.
Week Four	Tuesday, 2/17 Reading: John Ashbery's <i>Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror</i> Thursday, 2/20 Workshop Group C. Group A distributes poems.
Week Five	Tuesday, 2/24 Reading: Adrienne Rich's translations of some Dutch poets: "Accountability" by Gerrit Achterberg, "Our Family" by Leo Vroman, "Sleepwalking" by Chr. J. van Geel. Thursday, 2/27 Workshop Group A. Group B distributes poems.
Week Six	Tuesday, 3/3

Reading: Tommy Pico's, "from Junk," excerpt from Claudia Rankine's, *Citizen*

Thursday, 3/5

Workshop Group B. Group C distributes poems.

Week Seven Tuesday, 3/10

Reading: Wayne Koestenbaum's, "All Art is Emotional." Oral story telling day.

Thursday, 3/12

Workshop Group C.

Week Eight Spring Break. No classes.

Week Nine Tuesday, 3/24

Reading: Jorge Luis Borges', "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," "The Library of Babel," and Donald Barthelme's, "The School."

Thursday, 3/26

Group A distributes stories.

Week Ten Tuesday, 3/31

Reading: George Saunders', "Jon" and Jhumpa Lahiri's, "A Temporary Matter."

Thursday, 4/2

Workshop Group A. Group B distributes stories.

Week Eleven Tuesday, 4/7

Reading: Anais Nin's, "Sirocco," Jamaica Kincaid's, "Girl," and David Foster Wallace's, "The Soul is Not a Smithy."

Thursday, 4/9

Workshop Group B. Group C distributes stories.

Week Twelve Tuesday, 4/14

Reading: Renata Adler's, *Speedboat*.

Thursday, 4/16

Workshop Group C. Group A distributes stories.

Week Thirteen Tuesday, 4/21

Reading: Clarice Lispector's, "One Day Less," Leonora Carrington's, "The Debutante" and Kelly Link's, "Stone Animals."

Thursday, 4/23

Workshop Group A. Group B distributes stories.

Week Fourteen Tuesday, 4/28

Reading: Roberto Bolaño's *Distant Star*

Thursday, 4/30

Workshop Group B. Group C distributes stories.

Week Fifteen Tuesday, 5/5
Reading: Lydia Davis' "The Two Davises and the Rug," Deb Olin Unferth's, "Likeable," and Diane Williams' "Beauty, Love, and Vanity Itself."

Thursday, 5/7
Workshop Group C.

Week Sixteen Tuesday, 5/16
Reflections and celebration
Final portfolios due