

CREATIVE WRITING – INTRODUCTION TO FICTION & POETRY

Instructor: Trevor Alderson

Email: tma282@nyu.edu

Time: TBD

Location: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Course Overview

Welcome to Introduction to Creative Writing - Fiction & Poetry! In this class you will learn how to improve your writing through craft focused readings and in class workshop. By workshopping we will get the opportunity to have our work read and to learn how to provide the most useful feedback. For craft, the goal is to get you reading like writers, to look for things to steal from other works, to think critically about your own craft, and to learn some of the tricks that have been proven to work. I hope you all have a fabulous time, and with that, on to the syllabus!

What is Expected of You

- **Workshop:** Each student will be workshopped three times. Once in fiction, once in poetry, and once in the genre of their choice. Workshop submissions are due by Friday at 11:59pm so that the class has time to read them and provide thoughtful feedback. For fiction you will submit one story totalling 8 - 15 pages. For poetry you will submit up to 5 poems totalling no more than 12 pages. When critiquing another student's work, you are expected to provide line edits and a letter of at least half a page of broader feedback. Be positive! There is a fine line between criticism and attack, so let's try not to cross it. I will intervene if necessary. The third workshop will be a revision of either your fiction submission or your poetry based on the insights gained in workshop.
- **Craft Discussion:** Every week there will be an assigned reading corresponding with the coming workshop. Ahead of poetry workshops we will read poetry, and ahead of fiction workshops we will read fiction. Trying to put everyone in the right mindset. You are to bring to class at least one thing you would like to steal from the work we have read and be prepared to share it with the class. Please do the reading. I'll be able to tell if you don't. We will spend class time discussing the work, looking for opportunities to learn from it, whether ideas we'd like to steal or mistakes we'd like to avoid. We will also do in class writing exercises.
- **Journal:** You will keep a journal in this class. You will bring this journal to every class. You will take notes in this journal. You will write your reading responses in this journal. You will write about things that happen in your day or your week or whatever you want. You can tape stuff into the journal. You can draw in the journal. You must use the journal. The idea of the journal is to get you to record the things that you notice, and eventually to notice a pattern in the things that you notice and the things you should be

writing about. I will be reading your journals at the end of the class. I will keep whatever is written strictly confidential, but if there is anything you prefer I not know then don't put it in, or you can redact it later on.

- **Office Hours:** You will meet with me twice during the semester. Once after you have been workshopped twice in order to discuss revisions, and once at the end of the semester after you have turned in your journals to discuss your writing going forwards. My office hours will be the hours immediately after class time or by appointment.

How you are Graded

- **Writing: 30%** You are graded on your **effort**, not the quality of your writing. This class is not about proving who's the best writer, it is about getting better. This also includes timely submission of your workshop pieces. It is rude to give your classmates little time to read your writing, and the feedback you receive will suffer for it.
- **Reading: 30%** This includes your reading responses as well as your written workshop critiques. The craft readings make up half of our class, so please don't sell yourself short by not reading them. I'll be able to tell. Your classmates will be able to tell. It'll be awkward. Don't make this weird.
- **Participation: 30%** Being actively involved in discussion is vital to becoming a good reader and a good critic. Your participation grade includes your verbal feedback in workshop, your contribution to craft discussions, and your attendance/punctuality (policy below). Please note that dominating a conversation is counter-productive and will not result in higher participation points. Part of being a good literary citizen is knowing when to let other speak.
- **Journal: 10%** You will bring your journals to every class. You will write in them every day. You will turn them in at the end of the semester. You will be graded on having done the assignments and filling the journal. You must fill it to the last page.

Classroom Policies

- **Attendance:** You are allowed two absences excused or not. I am not interested in verifying emergencies. After that your grade will decrease by half a letter grade (B+ to a B) for each absence. If you are late three times it counts as an absence. If you are late by more than 30 minutes you are considered absent. If you miss your own workshop you cannot get credit for that piece, which amounts to 10% of your grade, or a full letter grade. Time is tight. We will not be making up workshops.
- **Plagiarism:** Don't. I'll have to report you to the university, and this is creative writing. Make something up.
- **Laptops and Cell Phones:** Don't. They are seductive and distracting and not to be trusted. It's good for you to be without them for an hour. If I see you texting or tweeting or whatever you kids do then it will impact your participation grade.

- **Issues or Discomfort:** If you require any special accommodations or have any issues you would rather not discuss in front of the class please reach out to me. I will strive to make this class a safe and welcoming environment for everyone involved.
- **Topics to Avoid in Workshop:** Please do not submit pieces with pervasive racism, sexism, sexual assault, or violence. It's not that you can't write about controversial subjects, in fact I encourage you to explore, but bear your audience in mind. Especially do not write something specifically to get a rise out of the class, and please do not write about anyone in the class. Feel perfectly free to check with me in advance if you are not sure. The standard will be more forgiving than I think the tone of this paragraph makes it sound.

A few additional notes:

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.

Tentative Schedule:

1st Class : Introductions and Syllabus Review.

2nd: Jennifer Egan

3rd, January 30th: Students 1,2, 3, and 4 Poetry Workshop.

4th: Yusef Komunyaaka & Frank O'Hara

5th: Students 10, 11, and 12 Fiction Workshop

6th: James Wood & Michelle Huneven

7th: Students 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 Poetry Workshop

8th: Charles Bukowski & Allen Ginsberg

9th: Students 13, 14, and 15 Fiction Workshop

10th: Lorrie Moore

11th: Students 10, 11, 12, and 13 Poetry Workshop

12th: Ocean Vuong and Solmaz Sharif

13th: Students 1, 2, and 3 Fiction Workshop

14th: Carmen Maria Machado

15th: Students 14 and 15 Poetry Workshop

16th: Morgan Parker and Danez Smith

17th: Students 4, 5, and 6 Fiction Workshop

18th: Amy King

19th: Students 7, 8, and 9 Poetry Workshop

20th: George Saunders & Michael Chabon

21st: Students 1, 2, 3, and 4 Preference Workshop

22nd: Jorge Luis Borges and Pablo Neruda

23rd: Students 5, 6, 7, and 8 Preference Workshop

24th: Mark Helprin

25th: Students 9, 10, 11, and 12 Preference Workshop

26th: No Country for Old Men & Beginners

27th: Students 13, 14, and 15 Preference Workshop

28th: Final Class Party