

**CREATIVE WRITING:
Introduction to Fiction and Poetry**

**Spring 2019
CRWRI-UA 815
M/W 2:00 - 3:15 PM
Bobst Library, Room LL140**

**Professor: Claire Werkiser
Email: cw1350@nyu.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment**

OBJECTIVE

The goal of this course is to *generate*. We will participate in the art of writing as creators and critics, authors and readers. This semester will be a process of creative exploration and self-discovery, built upon the solid foundation of craft lectures and discussions. Our readings will span a variety of genres, forms, and subjects, broadening your conceptions of what it means to be a “writer.” With readings that focus on people of color, queer, and marginalized voices, we will explore our responsibility as writers under the modern sociopolitical pressures and how those tensions work from a craft perspective. We will spend time questioning the stylistic choices made by these authors and then examine the choices that we make in our own work. We will experiment, probe, question, and create.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Our class will be split between the study of craft and the practice of workshop. We will approach writing from all sides, letting our analytical discussions inform our artistic work.

Craft

Our craft classes will focus on the discussion and analytical dissection of published work. For each craft class, you must PRINT and ANNOTATE all assigned readings. Be reckless with your highlighter and pen. Mark anything that strikes you. This will make it much easier for you to bring up points of interest or confusion during class and will help you write your critical responses.

Our in-class discussions will be guided by your lines of inquiry. I want to get at the root of what interests you as readers and as writers. You will be assigned groups at the beginning of the semester. Each group will present on the day’s readings and guide the discussion. You will present in your groups twice during the semester.

Workshop

Our workshop classes will focus on the discussion and critique of student work. You will submit three times over the course of the semester (Fiction, Poetry, and Writer’s Choice).

Hybrid forms are also acceptable, but on a case-by-case basis. Please email me PRIOR to your submission date to discuss.

For many of you, this may be your first workshop experience or your first time trying creative writing entirely. Don't worry! Write weird, write honest, write experimental, and write *hard*. We're not looking for perfection, but we are looking for *effort*. Please proofread your submissions (more than once)! Multiple typos or sloppy grammar will result in a deduction of your workshop grade.

Hard copies of workshop submissions will be due a FULL WEEK before your workshop date. Please print 16 copies, one for each student and the professor. Remember to staple and include your name on every assignment, workshop submissions in particular. Late/emailed submissions will result in an automatic 25% reduction to your submission grade. Submissions late by more than three days will carry a 50% deduction.

In addition to line-editing the hard copies of workshop submissions, you are required to write a letter for each student author going up for workshop. We will discuss the specifics of writing critique letters later in the semester, but each letter should be thoughtful, critical, and kind. This is a symbiotic process. We can only improve by working together.

****A note on comments: Intolerant, rude, or patronizing comments are not acceptable. If you read or hear a comment during class, or if I feel a particular comment spoken in class is any of the aforementioned, the person responsible will be addressed with serious consequences.*

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Workshop Submissions

Hard copies of workshop submissions are due a week before your scheduled workshop date. Please bring enough copies for each student and the professor. Poetry submissions should contain 2-3 poems and be approximately 10 pages. Prose submissions should be approximately 8-15 pages in length. Unless stylistically imperative, please use a 12 pt. serif font and double spacing.

Critique Letters

Critique letters for each author are due every workshop. Please bring two hard copies of your letters to class. Critique letters should be approximately one page.

Creative Assignments

We will engage with several generative writing exercises over this course of this semester. Some will be completed in class and others will be taken home for more polish and consideration. These assignments can serve as a great jumping off point for your larger workshop submissions.

Final Portfolio

A portfolio of your workshop submissions, as well as an extended critical essay, will be due at the end of the semester. You will revise one previously-submitted piece and attach a note detailing your revisions, write a personal essay, and respond to one of our readings with a critical response essay. You will choose a cover image for your future “collection,” as well as a title.

GRADING

A total of 1,000 points is possible for this class.

Attendance 10% - 100 points

This is, quite simply, a measure of your physical presence in class. Participation and effort in class is factored into your engagement grade below.

Engagement 30% - 300 points

This includes your group presentations and contributions to class discussions. The most significant portion of this grade is comprised of your in-class participation. You must contribute every day to receive a full participation grade.

Creative Work 40% - 400 points

This includes your workshop submissions, critique letters, and creative/critical assignments.

Final Portfolio 10% - 200 points

Extra Credit - possible 10% - 100 points

Option A - Literary Event Participation

New York is full of literary events, book launches, and readings, many of which are free and hosted at the Lillian Vernon Writers' House on campus. You may receive up to 20 points of extra credit for attending a literary event. After the event, please submit proof of attendance, as well as a brief typed page describing the event and your reflections.

You may also earn up to 50 points of extra credit by participating in a public reading in some way. This can be through volunteering, reading at an event yourself, or organizing a literary event of your own. After the event, please submit proof of participation (I would love to see a video of your readings!), as well as a brief typed page describing the event and your reflections.

Option B - Critical Essay

For 25 extra credit points, you may choose to write a literary criticism paper on any of the following books. The paper can be 5-7 pages in length and should follow MLA formatting.

Exit West - Mohsin Hamid
Her Body and Other Parties - Carmen Maria Machado
The End of Eddy - Edouard Louis
Three Strong Women - Marie N'Diaye
Sing, Unburied, Sing - Jesmyn Ward
Tale for the Time Being - Ruth Ozeki
Bluets - Maggie Nelson
After the Quake - Haruki Murakami
Take this Stallion - Anaïs Duplan
Night Sky with Exit Wounds - Ocean Vuong

HOUSEKEEPING

Attendance Policies

The success of this class is contingent upon your attendance. This is not a lecture class. You cannot “make up” the information missed just by getting a copy of another student’s notes. You may be absent twice over the course of the semester without a grade penalty. Only ONE absence can be unexcused (meaning no doctor’s note, etc.) without penalty. “Unexcused” does NOT mean that you just don’t show up for class. If you will not be in class, email the professor BEFORE class begins or you will receive no points for that day. You are still responsible for all missed work. Please attach any assignments due that day as well. More than three absences, excused or unexcused, will result in a full letter grade deduction.

Missing your workshop or submission day greatly impacts the flow of class and shows a lack of respect for the time of your fellow students. Failure to attend on your workshop day will result in an automatic 25% deduction to your workshop grade and a 10% deduction to your participation grade for the semester.

Two instances of tardiness (being more than ten minutes late to class) will be equated to one absence. If you are fifteen minutes late to class, it will be counted as an absence.

Required Materials

You will need a designated notebook for this class. All of the readings in this class will be available for free online. This is done to keep your book costs low. That being said, this is a printing-heavy course. Please familiarize yourself with your printing options and always have a backup plan in case lines are long or something jams. Printer problems are NOT an excuse to hand in an assignment late or to come to class unprepared.

Content

This class is structured around creative expression and may include “adult” content, including violence, sexual situations, and drug use. Profanity and adult situations are permitted in your workshop submissions; however, workshop submissions should never include content that is

degrading, gratuitously violent, or intolerant. ALL prose submissions will be discussed as fiction. Please avoid using the names of other students (or professors) in your workshop submissions.

Participation

This class is driven by discussion. It is vital that you come to class having read the day's assignments and ready to discuss them in a meaningful way. EVERYONE must speak in EVERY class in order to get a full participation grade for the day.

Communication

If questions or concerns arise between classes, feel free to email me. However, your grade will be negatively impacted if you consistently email with questions answered either in the syllabus or in class. If you have a general questions about assignments or due dates, please email a member of your group. If they are unable to help you, please email me directly.

Technology

Please put all cell phones on silent and away for the duration of our class. Laptops will not be necessary unless specified on a certain day.

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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 as soon as possible.

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.

Plagiarism

This is a creative writing course, emphasis on "creative." To avoid getting kicked out of the university, please familiarize yourself with the NYU Plagiarism Policy.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

January 28 (M) - First day of classes.

January 30 (W) - The Writer

“How to be a Writer,” Lorrie Moore
“On Keeping a Notebook,” Joan Didion

February 4 (M) - Narrative Arcs - Group 1

“Girl on Girl,” Diane Cook
“A Primer for the Weird Small Loves,” Richard Siken
“Happy Endings,” Margaret Atwood

February 6 (W) - Character - Group 2

“Found Objects,” Jennifer Egan
“Car Crash While Hitchhiking,” Denis Johnson
“Second Attempt Crossing,” Javier Zamora

February 11 (M) - Setting - Group 3

“Hitting Budapest,” NoViolet Bulawayo
“Homosexuality,” Charif Shanahan
“I used to live here once,” Jean Rhys
“As Good As Anything,” Alice Notley

February 13 (W) - Point of View & Voice - Group 4

“A Temporary Matter,” Jhumpa Lahiri
“It Says What We All Think,” Elaine Equi
“Girl,” Jamaica Kincaid
“i can't stay in the same room with that woman for five minutes,” Charles Bukowski

February 18 (M) - President's Day. No classes.

February 20 (W) - Dialogue & Tone - Group 5

“Wants,” Grace Paley
“St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves,” Karen Russell
“Let Me Handle My Business, Damn,” Morgan Parker

February 25 (M) - Workshop - Cycle One Begins

February 27 (W) - Workshop

March 4 (M) - Workshop

March 6 (W) - Workshop

March 11 (M) - Workshop

March 13 (W) - Repetition - Group 1

“The Husband Stitch,” Carmen Maria Machado
“Saying Your Names,” Richard Siken
“On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous,” Ocean Vuong
“If You Are Over Staying Woke,” Morgan Parker

March 18 (M) - Spring Recess. No classes.

March 20 (W) - Spring Recess. No classes.

March 25 (M) - Workshop - Cycle Two Begins

March 27 (W) - Beginnings & Endings - Group 2

“Horror Story,” Carmen Maria Machado
“In the Dream,” Jenny Johnson
“On Alcohol,” sam sax
“The Lottery,” Shirley Jackson

April 1 (M) - Workshop

April 3 (W) - Magic in Literature - Group 3

“Americca,” Aimee Bender
“The Rememberer,” Aimee Bender
“Sea Oak,” George Saunders

April 8 (M) - Workshop

April 10 (W) - Workshop

April 15 (M) - Workshop

April 17 (W) - Technology & Literature - Group 4

“The Feels of Love,” T Kira Madden
“Identity Politics,” Tayi Tibble
“Dinosaurs in the Hood,” Danez Smith
“Cat Person,” Kristen Roupenian

April 22 (M) - Workshop - Cycle Three Begins

April 24 (W) - Workshop

April 29 (M) - Workshop

May 1 (W) - Sex, Love, and Other Drugs - Group 5

“Inventory,” Carmen Maria Machado
“Sometimes I wish I felt the side effects,” Danez Smith
“I Would Have No Pubes If I Were Truly In Love,” Jenny Zhang

“How to Write a Sex Scene,” Rebecca Schiff

May 6 (M) - Workshop

May 8 (W) - Workshop

May 13 (M) - Last Day of Classes.