

Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.019

Meeting Times: TR 12:30-1:45PM

Instructor: Sonia Feigelson

Contact: soniafeigelson@gmail.com

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This class is a brief introduction to Creative Writing as an artistic discipline. This means that you are here because you have an interest in writing and are hoping that I, along with your peers, can make you a better writer. Through workshop and craft analysis, we will work to differentiate between and experiment with the tools available to you in building your own text work.

Together, we will examine fiction, poetry, and hybrid texts that I believe can teach us something about how to tell a story, how to interrogate an idea, how to communicate, and how to listen.

This is not a literature class—we are taking off our good English student hats and monocles, and we are taking apart language to see how it works. We are figuring out how best to build our own narratives by learning about others'. A good writer is a good reader. A good reader is a good listener.

Class Structure:

The class itself will consist of two components: craft and workshop. In our craft discussions, we'll work together to dissect the day's reading material. Somewhere in each of these pieces of writing there's a valuable craft lesson waiting for us. In the pursuit of craft, we will also share in the joy, misery, embarrassment, and ecstasy of in class writing assignments and exercises. The night before every craft session, please email me three to five sentences that struck you from the assigned reading, plus any extra notes you wish to include about that sentence. These emails will count toward your reading responses grade.

In workshop, we will be working to create our own work, revising that work, and providing respectful and useful feedback to our classmates on their work. While we will discuss pieces with intellectual care, we will also adopt a kind and constructive Workshop etiquette.

You will be expected to turn in an annotated copy of the submitter's work on the day on their workshop, complete with a one page response note addressing what works and what doesn't work about the piece, as well as any areas of confusion. Feedback should be constructive. It should concern both what is exciting about the piece and how the piece as a whole can be improved. This exercise is not designed to discourage anyone. I encourage honesty and require all students to be respectful during workshop.

During our first round of workshop, you will turn in one piece of fiction. During our second round of workshop, you will turn in one poem. During our third round of workshop, it's dealer's choice—you can turn it either one poem or one piece of flash fiction (fiction under 1,000 words).

What you should Bring to Class:

Aside from total engagement? A notebook, hard copies of the pieces being workshopped and/or discussed during craft on that day, two copies of each response letter (one for the submitter and one you will turn in to me), a hard copy of any other assignments due that day, a writing implement, compassion, and maybe a bottle of water.

On the Thursday before you are workshopped (so, a week before your workshop), you should bring hard copies of your piece to class for distribution. You may not email your piece.

Workshop Piece Formatting:

All workshop writing will be typed, TNR, 12-pt font. Stories should be between 4-8 pages, double-spaced, and poems can be of any length, single-spaced. I encourage double-sided printing. Bring hard copies of each story or poem to workshop when it is your turn to distribute. All submissions must include your name as well as page numbers.

If you want to submit a chapter from a novel-in-progress, it must be the first chapter, and you must e-mail or come speak to me about it beforehand. If you would like to submit a series of flash pieces, that is probably fine, but email me to check anyway.

Writer's Notebook:

Buy one! In it, write two observations of any kind every day. So, fourteen observations a week. These will not be graded for quality, and if you don't want me to read them due to privacy, I will honor that. The only part of this that will affect your grade is whether you do them or not. The observations should be whatever you want them to be. For example:

Today I saw a half-litre of coke stuck in the barren flower pot outside of a restaurant.

Also, please use this notebook to take workshop and craft notes during craft sessions and for any in-class writing exercises we do.

I will collect these randomly throughout the semester to check in on you. You will not know when. They will count toward your participation grade.

Final Portfolio:

This class will not have a final exam, but on the last day of class you will turn in a final portfolio. This portfolio will consist of your revised pieces of writing, as well as your earlier drafts of that writing so that we can track the progress of these pieces. It will also include a brief written statement about your writing and your progress throughout the course.

Technology:

You don't need it unless you need it. The way I will know if you need it is that you will provide me with an official note detailing your special dispensation.

Attendance:

Especially in a workshop setting, it is vital for you to be present for every class. You're allowed one unexcused absence, after that each unexcused absence will lower your final grade by half a letter (A to A-, etc.) I understand that emergencies happen. If one does, just email me and we can talk on a case-by-case basis. Tardiness (arriving more than 10 minutes late) is also taken seriously. If you're tardy three times that counts as one unexcused absence. In a class like this, where we are sharing and discussing personal work, being absent or tardy can be very disruptive and hinders the workshop environment. It's critical that we all take this seriously.

Plagiarism:

Please don't. You will receive a zero on the assignment and you will be referred to the college for disciplinary action. It is a waste of everyone's time to workshop plagiarized work. If at any point you feel so much pressure that you are thinking about plagiarism at all, please contact me. Consult the link below to view NYU's policy on academic integrity:

<http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>

Office Hours:

You are required to meet with me once over the course of the semester. If you want to meet with me more than once, that's great. I'm excited to see you there. Office hours will happen at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writer's House, at 58 West 10th Street, by appointment.

Grading Breakdown:

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

Extra Credit:

If you attend a reading throughout the semester and give me a 500-word response to it, I will award you extra credit. If you already have an A+ and you attend a reading anyway, you will simply become a more well-rounded human being.

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 my attention. Please send me 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, please reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.

FAQs

Will I be graded on how good my writing is?

Your writing will be graded on effort, not talent. If you arrive to class late, miss classes, fail to submit on time, neglect to write letters to other students in the workshop, etc. the quality of your stories and poems will not compensate for it.

Can I eat during class?

I'm aware that our class is during lunch time and that you maybe be coming from a morning class or just waking up. You're welcome to bring quiet and inoffensive snacks that won't distract you, me, or the rest of the students.

Can I switch workshop dates with another student?

Yes, but you and the other student must both email me confirmation 24 hours before the day that the piece will be distributed. Once the story or poem is distributed, there will be no switching.

What if I have a disability that might prevent me from completing assignments on time and requires accommodations?

The Moses Center can provide you with the necessary documentation to get these accommodations. You can contact the Moses Center at mosescsd@nyu.edu. Please provide this documentation to me by the add/drop deadline on **2/10/19**.

What if another student's behavior, writing, or workshop comments make me uncomfortable?

If you feel comfortable approaching the person privately or via email to express your concerns, I encourage you to do so. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable approaching the other student, please let me know privately or via email so that I can address the situation.

Class Schedule:

Week 1:

1/29: Introductions, review syllabus, determine workshop groups

Workshop etiquette hand-out for reference.

Reading assignments due (to be discussed) next class:

The Sentence is a Lonely Place, Gary Lutz

An Incomplete Taxonomy of First Sentences, Handout

1/31 Craft seminar on assigned readings

Reading assignments due (to be discussed) next class:

The School, Donald Barthelme

The Perfect Gerbil, George Saunders

Week 2:

2/5: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Reading assignments due next class:

Not Knowing, Donald Barthelme

Jon, George Saunders

2/7 Craft seminar on assigned readings

Week 3:

2/12: Workshop Group 1

Reading assignments due next class:

In the Cemetery where Al Jolson is Buried, Amy Hempel

A Conversation with My Father, Grace Paley

2/14: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Week 4:

2/19 Workshop Group 2

Reading assignments due next class:

Girl, Jamaica Kincaid

Boys, Rick Moody

Deb Olin Unferth, Deb Olin Unferth

The Bed Moved, Rebecca Schiff

2/22: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Week 5:

2/26: Workshop Group 3 (three students)

Reading assignments due next class:

Light, Kelly Link

2/28: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Week 6:

3/5: Workshop Group 4

Reading assignments due next class:

You, Disappearing, Alexandra Kleeman

3/7: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Week 7:

3/12: Workshop Group 5

Reading assignments due next class:

The Nails, WS Merwin

One Art, Elizabeth Bishop

The Railroad Station, Wislawa Szymborska

3/14: Craft seminar on assigned readings

Reading assignments due next class:

What Did I Love, Ellen Bass

Practicing, Marie Howe

Scary, No Scary, Zachary Schomburg

Week 8:

3/26: Craft seminar on assigned readings

3/28: Workshop Group 1

Reading assignments due next class:

Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong, Ocean Vuong

Feet, Ross Gay

Upon Reading that Eric Dolphy Transcribed Even the Calls of Certain Species of Birds, John Murillo

Week 9:

4/2: Craft seminar on assigned readings

4/4: Workshop Group 2

Reading assignments due next class:

Prose Poetry and Flash Fiction Handout

The Cornmeal, Lydia Davis

Sticks, George Saunders

The Animal Spell, Zachary Schomburg

Airplane, Zachary Schomburg

To Be Honest, Deb Olin Unferth

Week 10:

4/9: Craft seminar on assigned readings, in-class writing exercises

4/11: Workshop Group 3

Reading assignments due next class:

Excerpts from Jane, A Murder, Maggie Nelson

Week 11:

4/16: Craft seminar on assigned readings

4/18: Workshop Group 4

Reading assignments due next class:

The Glass Essay, Anne Carson

(This is an extended piece, and will take a good amount of time to read, so start early.)

Week 12:

4/23: Craft seminar on assigned readings

4/25: Workshop Group 1

Week 13:

4/30: Workshop Group 2

5/2: Workshop Group 3

Week 14:

5/7: Workshop Group 4

5/9: Closing remarks, final portfolios due