

Spring 2019-CRWRI-UA.815.002  
MW: 12:30PM-1:45PM  
Classroom: Bobst Rm. 837

Instructor: Mimi Ton  
Email: mt3552@nyu.edu

## Intro to Creative Writing: Fiction & Poetry

*"Writing is my way of expressing – and thereby eliminating – all the various ways we can be wrong-headed."* – Zadie Smith

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you ."* – Maya Angelou

### Course Objective:

In this class we will embark on a spiritual journey together. We will study the play of words, how they transform, transcend, and infuse both chaos and beauty onto our world. We will experience the power of poetry, short stories, and song lyrics as a means to better understand our human connection. We will study the craft of these genre literatures to develop our writing and revision skills. Most importantly we will break the old cycle of literature to welcome artists from various backgrounds (poets, authors, rappers, singers, etc.).

### Class Structure:

- Craft Classes: As with any craft course, it is important to study its mechanics and functionality. We will do this every Monday. Our goal in craft is to understand the framework of words and how they operate. We want to understand how words reflect feeling, how words make us feel, deeply. We will unravel the blueprint of this core, thus enduring lots of emotional labor. We will dive into different areas of writing to dissect language down to its bare bones and we will discuss these topics together as a writing community.
- Workshops: You will put your craft into practice with the help of your peers. This is where we will truly become a writing community. Everyone will receive 10-15 minutes (depending on groups sizes) of workshop time. Groups up for workshop will submit to the Google class group **Sunday by 1pm**. *Please refrain from making further edits after submitting your piece.* **Submissions made after this deadline will be subject to a cold read & 16 printed copies.** Written comments will be given during workshop rather than before.
- Workshop Comments: Please **hand-write your comments on a printed copy**. Scanned copies can be sent to me via email before every workshop (preferred). I will also accept printed copies in class. Original copies will be handed back to the author. Please feel free to add additional comments to this version while workshop is in session.

### **Recitations:**

You are encouraged to memorize a poem or prose piece that is **not your own** to recite to the class (minimum of 12 lines). Recitations will start our weeks together. We will have one student recite a new piece Every Monday (including some Wednesday's) before class. Please print out 16 copies of the poem you will recite.

**Office Hours:** By appointment (please email me at: [mt3552@nyu.edu](mailto:mt3552@nyu.edu)). You are required to schedule at least one meeting with me during the semester.

### **Grading:**

Participation **20%** (discussions, in class free-writes, workshop, etc.)

Final Portfolio (includes presentation, essay, and revisions) **55%**

Recitation **5%**

Homework **20%** (includes workshop comments, submissions, etc.)

Extra Credit (10 points)

Myers-Brigg Extra Credit (2 points)

### **Final Portfolio:**

Your final portfolio will consist of 3 parts:

1. Hybrid Presentation **25%**
2. Your 5 edited & revised writings from workshop (poems, proses, & short stories) **25%**
  - *2/5 must be a poem and the other a prose or short story.*
3. Self reflection essay **5%**

### **More on hybrid presentation:**

- In order to improve our writing skills, in order to heighten our awareness and connect to our higher self we must scan the world outside of our writing. Your goal for this presentation is to fuse together another mode of art (music, photography, dance, film, illustration, visual art, slam, etc.) with a newly written poem, short story, or prose piece (have fun with it, respect each other and be mindful of the space you'll be working with ~ make sure you'll have room to perform if needed).  
~**Presentations will run 10-15 minutes, no more no less.**

Some hybrid ideas (for more ideas please see me during office hours):

- A short film
- Photography alongside poetry
- Illustrate/paint a small chapbook/book of short stories, etc.

### **More on self reflection essay:**

- This will open your portfolio and it will dig deep into your experience of workshop and craft. Write about your growth, your discoveries, your ideas, and most importantly, write about what you've learned - not only in class but also outside of class during this duration. What was the process of writing like for you? What was the process of workshop like? Ground yourself and let your thoughts spill over **1-2 pages** (12 font Times New Roman).

## Guiding Principles:

**Safe Space:** We will respect each other and treat each other (and our writings) with care. Bullying, interruptions, or talking down on anyone **under any circumstances** is completely unacceptable!

**Plagiarism:** Just don't do it. You'll receive a **ZERO** for the assignment!

**Attendance:** After the add/drop period you are allowed **1 unexcused absence**. After that I will deduct 1 point for every unexcused absence.

**Late Assignments:** Please turn your assignments in on time. Starting the third week, I will **deduct 5 points** for any late assignments (this includes copies of workshop comments). This policy does not apply to workshop submissions.

**Cell Phones & laptops:** Please refrain from the use of cell phones in class unless stated otherwise. Laptops may only be used for in-class purposes.

### **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.

### **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 can also register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities by calling: 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>

# Course Schedule

## Week 1

**Monday, January 28:** Get to know each other, Syllabus, Rules.

**Introductory Materials:** (feel free to read at your own leisure):

- Eight Letters to a Young Writer by: Teju Cole
- Losing It by: Roxane Gay
- Fiction Is a Trudge, Poetry Is a Dance: On Poet Novelists by: Sonya Chung
- Poet vs. Novelist
- How to Become A Writer by Lorrie Moore.
- Unlearning To Write
- Why I Write

**Workshop: Wednesday, January 30** ~Group A

## Week 2

**Craft: Monday, February 4:** Poetry vs. Prose along w/ Sentences, Syntax, & Diction.

We will read, listen, and dissect language down to its branch of sentences.

**Materials:**

- Vectors: 56 Aphorisms and Ten-second Essays
- Ten Best Sentences
- Self Portrait as Exit Wounds by: Ocean Vuong \*
- Wigphrastic – after Ellen Gallagher by: Terrance Hayes \*
- How to Draw an Invisible man by: Terrance Hayes \*
- Woo Woo Roll Deep by: Angel Nafis \*
- A Hunger Like No Other by: Teju Cole \*

**Workshop: Wednesday, February 6** ~Group B

## Week 3

**Craft: Monday, February 11:** Love

Good writing evokes emotion. Good writing rejects the ego. Good writing stems from the heart...let's explore this more.

**Materials:**

- The Gift by: Li-Young Lee
- Tenderness by: Stephen Dunn
- One Hundred Love Sonnets: XVII by: Pablo Neruda
- Love Poems of Rumi
- We Never Know by Yusef Komunyakaa
- My Lover is A Woman by: Pat Parker
- Pink Matter by: Frank Ocean
  - Lyrics
- A Temporary Matter by: Jhumpa Lahiri

**Workshop: Wednesday, February 13 ~Group C**

#### **Week 4**

**Monday, February 18 - *Presidents Day* (\*NO CLASS\*)**

**Workshop: Wednesday, February 20 ~Group A**

#### **Week 5**

**Craft: Monday, February 25: Exploring Narrative**

**Materials :**

- *The Crown Ain't Worth Much by: Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib*

**Workshop: Wednesday, February 27 ~Group B**

#### **Week 6**

**Craft: Monday, March 4: The Poetry of Hip-Hop & Spoken Word**

We will explore song lyrics alongside lyrical & slam poetry

**Material:**

- Ladies First by: Queen Latifah
  - Lyrics
- Parents Are The Hardest To Please
- Yet Still, I Wait
- Phenomenal Woman by: Maya Angelou
- Femicide Spoken Word
- Brenda's Got a Baby by: Tupac Shakur

- [Lyrics](#)
- [Pain by: Tupac Shakur](#)
- [Lyrics](#)
- [Common - I Used to Love H.E.R.](#)
- [Lyrics](#)

**Workshop: Wednesday, March 6** ~Group C

### Week 7

**Workshop: Monday, March 11:** ~Group A

**Workshop: Wednesday, March 13** ~Group B

### Week 8

**March 18-24** ~ Spring Break!

*\*Spring Break Assignment (Photography):* Capture 5 or more photos of your surroundings.

### Week 9

**Craft: Monday, March 25:** Photography and Poetry

#### **Materials:**

- [Photographs by: Barbara Guest \(poem\)](#)
- [Turning Poetry into Photos](#)
- [How poems inspire pictures](#)
- [See you at home](#)
- [12 African American Photographers You Should Follow Right Now](#)
- [Meet Michael McCoy, the Veteran Who Fights PTSD with Photography](#)
- [Alison Wright: Portraits of the Human Spirit \(Video\)](#)
- [BK by Photographer, Andre D. Wagner \(Video\)](#)

**Workshop: Wednesday, March 27** ~Group C

### Week 10

**Craft: Monday, April 1:** A Poetry Collection

#### **Materials:**

- *If They Come For Us* by: *Fatimah Asghar*

**Workshop: Wednesday, April 3** ~Group A

## Week 11

**Craft: Monday, April 8:** How language & tone makes us feel in the context of social issues.

### **Materials:**

- This is America by: Childish Gambino
- What America Needs to Tell The President
- Dear Young Man of Color
- “Toy Boat” by Ocean Vuong
- This War by: Philip Levine
- Home by: Warsan Shire
- See Through by: Nick Flynn
- Bullet Points by: Jericho Brown
- American Sonnet For My Past And Future Assassin by: Terrance Hayes
- “No More Heroes” Slam Poem
- A Private Experience by: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Workshop: Wednesday, April 10** ~Group B

## Week 12

**Craft: Monday, April 15:** Cross-Genres (Hybridity)

### **Materials:**

- Lemonade by: Beyonce
- Mortal Man by: Kendrick Lamar
  - Lyrics
- H.E.R. - Every Kind Of Way: A Short Film Inspired By Music From H.E.R.
- Nia & Ness: Exploring Identity through Dance and Spoken Poetry | BK Stories
- On The Transformative Power Of Hybrid Forms by: Matthew Hittinger

**Workshop: Wednesday, April 17** ~Group C

## Week 13

**Craft: Monday, April 22:** Short Films & Short Stories

### **Materials:**

- Thank You Ma'am (Video)
- Thank You Ma'am (Short Story)
- Story of Your Life by: Ted Chiang (Short Story)
- Liking What You See by: Ted Chiang (Short Story)

**Workshop: Wednesday, April 24** ~Group A

**Week 14**

**Craft: Monday, April 29:** Hybridized non-fiction, lyrical essays, and prose.

**Materials :**

- *Bluets* by: Maggie Nelson

**Workshop: Wednesday, May 1** ~Group B

**\*\*Week 15**

Group 1 Presentations: **Monday, May 6**

**Workshop: Wednesday, May 8** ~Group C

**\*\*Week 16**

Group 2 Presentations & Pot Luck: **Monday, May 13**

IMPORTANT: \*\*\* Final Portfolios must be **emailed** to me **NO LATER than Wednesday, May 15 @ 5pm** \*\*\*

**Required Books:**

*Bluets* by: Maggie Nelson

*If They Come For Us* by: Fatimah Asghar

*The Crown Ain't Worth Much* by: Hanif Abdurraqib