

## **Introduction to Poetry & Fiction, Spring 2019**

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45 p.m.

Office Hours: TBD

Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House

58 W 10th St (btw 5th and 6th)

Contact: alexandra.zukerman@gmail.com

\*You can also get items to me by putting them in my mailbox located at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writer's House, downstairs in basement.

**Description:** As a workshop, you will make your own poems and short stories and submit them to the class for discussion, but one of my favorite poets, Jorie Graham, says that "You can't give out what you haven't taken in": In this introductory course, we will read fiction and poetry (and even memorize some short poems!) so that they enter our bloodstream as writers. The inspiration to write often comes from a deep appreciation of the works that came before us and in our time. As we uncover new aspects of craft from week to week, we will discuss the reading both as practitioners and as readers.

The semester will be in two segments, one for Poetry and one for Fiction, but the genres often inform and inspire each other. We will be mindful of that fertile connection. We will watch films throughout the semester, in keeping with cross-fertilization.

Part of writing poetry is losing control and allowing our irrational minds to think on the page. In order to loosen up and generate new material, there will be in-class writing exercises every week. These will be collaborative or independent in nature. The goal is to have fun and to surprise ourselves.

For the Fiction segment, we will focus on short fiction and novellas. Every week, you will choose several sentences or a paragraph from the reading and briefly share with the class what you liked about it or found inspiring. Based on these lines, you will write the first sentence of a short story (yet to be written) in which you stand "knee deep" in whatever questions your chosen lines raised for you. As fiction takes longer to workshop, you will submit fewer short stories overall, but you will have more time to work on them in between submissions.

The required books are: Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook*; James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*; Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphoses*; and Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist*

Required books and all films will be on reserve through NYU Classes.

## Poetry

### **Class 1** Jan 30th (Wednesday)

Introduction, syllabus review, exercises;

In-class listening and discussion: Ashley Bryan video; Louise Gluck, "The Silver Lily"; Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays"; Alice Notley, "White Phosphorus"; Douglas Kearney, "Every Hard Rapper's Father Ever: Father of the Year" "Noah/Ham: Fathers of the Year"

### **Class 2**, Feb 4<sup>th</sup> (Monday)

Poetry as Making; exercises

POEMS (provided): Frank Bidart, "Advice to the Players", "Lament for the Makers"; Sylvia Plath, "The Bee Meeting", "Stings"; Robert Lowell, "Skunk Hour"; Alice Notley, "White Phosphorus"; Douglas Kearney, "Every Hard Rapper's Father Ever: Father of the Year" "Noah/Ham: Fathers of the Year"

ESSAYS (provided): "Poetry" (entry from Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics)

**\*Group 1: Email your poem to the class**

### **Class 3**, Feb 6<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Poetry Workshop (Group 1)

**\*Group 2: Bring 11 copies of your poem to class**

### **Class 4**, Feb 11<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Craft

Sound and Rhythm; exercises; in-class listening

POEMS (provided): Roxane Beth Johnson, "Blues for an Almost Forgotten Music"; William Shakespeare, "Full fathom five thy father lies"; T.S. Eliot, "Virginia"; additional poems in reading

ESSAYS: Mary Oliver, *A Poetry Handbook* (pp. 19-58)

### **Class 5**, Feb 13<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Poetry Workshop (Group 2)

**\*Group 1: Bring 11 copies of your poem to class**

**NO CLASS-** Feb 18<sup>th</sup>

### **Class 6**, Feb 20th (Wednesday) Craft

Closed Form; exercises; in-class listening

POEMS (provided): Elizabeth Bishop, "One Art"; John Ashbery, "Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape"; William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 73"; Rita Dove, John Keats, "To Autumn"; Sharon Olds, "Ode to the Tampon"; Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool"

### **Class 7**, Feb 25<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Poetry Workshop (Group 1)

**\*Group 2: Bring 11 copies of your poem to class**

### **Class 8**, Feb 27<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Craft

Open Form; exercises

POEMS (provided): William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All"; Ocean Vuong,

“Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong”; Jorie Graham, “Reading Plato”; Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”; Carolyn Forché, “The Colonel”; Catherine Barnett, “Into Perfect Spheres Such Holes Are Pierced”; Jack Gilbert, “Don Giovanni on his Way to Hell”; Wallace Stevens, “Anecdote of the Jar”

ESSAYS (provided and optional): Lyn Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure”

FILM (optional): Bela Tarr, “The Turin Horse”

**Class 9, March 4th (Monday) Poetry Workshop (Group 2)**

**\*Group 1: Bring 11 copies of your poem to class**

**Class 10, March 6<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Craft**

Autobiographical ‘I’; exercises

POEMS (provided): Claudia Rankine, *Plot* (excerpt); Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*,” (selected sections); William Wordsworth, “Stepping Westward”; Emily Dickinson, “Tell all the truth but tell it slant”; Yusef Komunyakaa, “Facing It”

FILM (optional): Werner Herzog, “Grizzly Man”

**Class 11, March 11<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Poetry Workshop (Group 1)**

**\*Group 2: Bring 11 copies of your poem to class**

**Class 12, March 13<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Craft**

Self, Voice, Persona; exercises

POETRY: Zbigniew Herbert (selected); Louise Glück (selected); Lucie Brock-Broido (selected); Elizabeth Bishop, “To the Fishhouses”

FILM (required): Andrei Tarkovsky, “Nostalghia”

**NO CLASS-** March 18<sup>th</sup>

**NO CLASS-** March 20<sup>th</sup>

**Class 13, March 25th (Monday) Poetry Workshop (Group 2)**

**Class 14, March 27<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Craft**

The Long Poem

POEM: Anne Carson, “The Glass Essay”

**Class 15, April 1<sup>st</sup> (Monday)**

Poetry Reading and Discussion

**\*\*REVISIONS of 3 poems due**

## Fiction

### Class 16, April 3rd (Wednesday) Craft

READING: Amy Hempel, *Collected Short Stories* (selected); James Joyce, *Dubliners* (selected);

start reading Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

FILM (required): Documentary, “Between the Folds”

### Class 17, April 8th (Monday) Craft

READING: Start reading Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

**\*Group 1: Please email your short story to the class**

### Class 18, April 10th (Wednesday) Craft

READING: Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

FILM (optional): David Lynch, “The Elephant Man”

### Class 19, April 15<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Craft and Fiction Workshop (Group 1)

READING: Flannery O’Connor, *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (selected)

start reading James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

**\*Group 2: Please email your short story to the class**

### Class 20, April 17<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday) Fiction Workshop (Group 1)

FILM (optional): Harmony Korine, “Gummo”

### Class 21, April 22nd (Monday) Fiction Workshop (Group 2)

**\*Group 1: Please email your short story to the class**

### Class 22, April 24th (Wednesday) Craft and Fiction Workshop (Group 2)

READING (provided): James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

FILM (required): Jim Sheridan, “The Field”

### Class 23, April 29<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Fiction Workshop (Group 1)

**\*Group 2: Please email your short story to the class**

### Class 24, May 1st (Wednesday) Craft and Fiction Workshop (Group 1)

READING (provided): Mark Richard, *The Ice at the Bottom of the World* (selected); start reading Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

FILM (optional): Jules Dassin, “Never on Sunday”

**Class 25**, May 6th (Monday) Fiction Workshop (Group 2)

**Class 26**, May 8th (Wednesday) Craft and Fiction Workshop (Group 2)

READING: Don Delillo, *The Body Artist*

EXERCISE: Choose inspirational lines; write a 1<sup>st</sup> sentence

FILM (optional): Zacharias Kunuk, “Fast Runner”

**Class 27**, May 13<sup>th</sup> (Monday) Reading and Celebrate!

FILM (optional): Arthur Hiller, “The Hospital”

**\*\*REVISION of 2 short stories due**

### **Further Information and Policies:**

Workshop: Due dates for poetry submissions are provided above (by Group). For fiction, short stories will be due one week prior to the date of your workshop. I will provide you with a schedule of dates on which you will workshop your stories. Please read and annotate your classmates’ work carefully and thoughtfully. Remember that as readers, our objective is not to judge whether a work is good or bad, but whether the author is achieving what he or she is trying to achieve. I will ask each of you to point out what is working in a piece and be prepared to comment on your classmates’ concerns about their work.

Readings: I will keep you posted on readings at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writer’s House and in the city. I encourage you to attend!

Community: This is not just a class but a community. It is a safe and nurturing space in which we support each other in our development as writers. Hopefully you will share work with one another long after this class has ended!

Grading: 20% participation; 80% preparation and submissions

Late work: Unlike other courses, late work simply cannot be considered due to the nature of workshopping. If you cannot submit a piece on time for workshop, the lack of preparation will affect your overall grade.

Attendance: Like late work, attendance is key to participation and preparation. If you miss class, it will affect your overall grade. You are permitted one absence without penalty but only if you write to me ahead of class with a solid reason.

Confidentiality: We sometimes put ourselves into our creative work and therefore submitted work or work read out loud in this course may never be shared outside of class, unless with the explicit consent of the author. While we must uphold the privacy of the authors, we cannot assume that their work is autobiographical, either.

Plagiarism: is obviously not tolerated.

No electronic devices will be used during class. Please silence your phones and put your computers away prior to the start of class.

Open-mindedness is required.