

**Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction & Poetry**  
CRWRI-UA 815, Section 009  
TR 11 AM – 12:15 PM

Instructor: Hannah Hirsh  
Email: hlh329@nyu.edu  
Office hours: By appointment

Objective

In this class, we will approach texts not as critics, but as writers. This means that we will focus less on questions of literary interpretation, and more on analyzing the strategies of successful writers and thinking of ways to adapt these strategies to our own work. The class will be divided into equal parts craft and workshop. On Tuesdays, we will discuss the weekly readings with a focus on a specific element of craft (image, metaphor, narrative, perspective, etc.) On Thursdays, we will discuss the work of our classmates, providing thoughtful and constructive feedback while sharpening our own critical thinking skills.

Required Texts

Selected readings will be available on NYU Classes. Please print out hard copies before class.

Grading

Class Participation – 30%

This class is discussion-based. In order for it to run smoothly, you must come to class prepared, having read all of the assigned reading, with at least three questions or observations about the texts. Be mindful of the page count for a given week, as some will be more than others.

Written Work – 40%

Your written work for this class will consist of a weekly writing exercise, comments on your classmates' workshop pieces, and four workshop assignments. Your comments should be thoughtful close readings that include line edits as well as a short paragraph summarizing your thoughts; we will discuss how to write helpful and focused comments at the beginning of term. For your workshop assignments, you may choose to write either fiction or poetry, although you must write in each genre at least once. **Workshop submissions are due Thursday at 11:59 PM the week before your piece is being workshopped.** Short stories should be 7-10 pages, double-spaced; poems should be no more than 2 pages. Please include your name, the date, and your workshop group at the top of all workshop submissions. Pieces that demonstrate an obvious lack of care and effort will be graded accordingly.

Final Portfolio – 25%

Your final portfolio is an opportunity to demonstrate your growth as a writer over the course of the semester. It should consist of revised copies of your poems and stories; the

original drafts with my comments; and a 3-4 page double-spaced personal statement reflecting on what you've learned since September, how your writing has changed, how you've changed as a reader, and how you used what you learned to make decisions concerning revision. Please also include a cover page and table of contents.

#### Recitation – 5%

Humans memorized and recited poetry for thousands of years before writing was invented. The oral tradition of poetry is an important one, and learning a poem by heart is an opportunity to deepen your relationship with a text that is meaningful to you. Students will sign up for a recitation date during the first week of class, and full points will be awarded to those who recite at least 14 lines of poetry during the semester.

Your midterm grades will be posted on November 5<sup>th</sup>. If you are unhappy with your grade at that time, please schedule a conference with me so we can discuss how you can improve over the second half of the semester.

#### Attendance

Class begins promptly at 11 AM. Please plan to arrive 5 minutes early. If you are more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be considered tardy. Two tardy arrivals will count as one unexcused absence. You are permitted one unexcused absence without penalty for the semester; after that, each following absence will result in a reduction of your final grade by one-third of a letter grade.

#### Office Hours

Students are required to meet with me at least once throughout the semester. Office hours will be scheduled by appointment.

#### Late Work

Late work will not be accepted, except under extenuating circumstances. Please turn in work on time.

#### Plagiarism

Don't even think about it. Plagiarism will result in an automatic failing grade and be reported to the university.

#### Food

I would prefer that people not eat in class; however, snacks will be permitted as long as they do not become a distraction. Please refrain from eating while your peers are reading their work aloud.

#### Technology

Phones and laptops are not permitted during class. All readings and written assignments must be printed in advance.

## Schedule & Readings

### **Week 1**

Tuesday, September 4 – Introductions & Syllabus

Thursday, September 6 – Advice, Instructions, & Lists

- “How to Become a Writer Or, Have You Earned This Cliché?” (Lorrie Moore), “Berryman” (W. S. Merwin), “Girl” (Jamaica Kincaid), “How to Be Perfect” (Ron Padgett), “Ithaka” (Cavafy), “Modern Madonnas” (Amy Gerstler), excerpt from “Jubilate Agno” (Christopher Smart)

### **Week 2**

Tuesday, September 11 – Image & Metaphor

- “Signs and Symbols” (Nabokov), “Knoxville: Summer of 1915” (James Agee), “In a Station of the Metro” (Ezra Pound), “The Red Wheelbarrow” (William Carlos Williams), “The Fish” (Elizabeth Bishop), “Oranges” (Gary Soto), “My Brother My Wound” (Natalie Diaz)

Thursday, September 13 - Workshop Group A

### **Week 3**

Tuesday, September 18 – Perspective & Voice

- “Why I Live at the P.O.” (Eudora Welty), “Orientation” (Daniel Orozco), “Having a Coke with You” (Frank O’Hara), “The Quiet Machine” (Ada Limón), “Confession” (Bob Perelman), “The Prelude” (Matthew Zapruder)

Thursday, September 20 - Workshop Group B

### **Week 4**

Tuesday, September 25 – Narrative & Pacing

- “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (Ambrose Pierce), “The Story of an Hour” (Kate Chopin), “The Enormous Radio” (John Cheever), “The Glass Essay” (Anne Carson), “Zone” (Apollinaire), “The Colonel” (Carolyn Forché)

Thursday, September 27 October 4 – Workshop Group C

### **Week 5**

Tuesday, October 2 – Rhythm, Repetition & Sounds

- “Spring in Fialta” (Nabokov), “I’m Over the Moon” (Brenda Shaughnessy), “Some Feel Rain” (Joanna Klink), “There Are Birds Here” (Jamaal May), “Memento Mori” (Catherine Barnett), “How to Draw a Perfect Circle” (Terrance Hayes)

Thursday, December 13 – Workshop Group A

### **Week 6**

Tuesday, October 9 – No class (Legislative Day)

Thursday, October 11 – Workshop Group B

### **Week 7**

Tuesday, October 16 – Place & Setting

- “A Wall of Fire Rising” (Edwidge Danticat), “Why I Like Country Music” (James Alan McPherson), “The Chrysanthemums” (John Steinbeck), “A Blessing” (James Wright), “Miscegenation” (Natasha Trethewey), “En Route” (Adam Zagajewski), “Venice, Unaccompanied” (Monica Youn)

Thursday, October 18 – Workshop Group C

### Week 8

Tuesday, October 23 – Line Breaks & Poetic Forms (Poetry Only)

- “Sonnet 130” (Shakespeare), “When I Consider How My Light is Spent” (Milton), “Archaic Torso” (Rilke), “Those Winter Sundays” (Robert Hayden), “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” (Terrance Hayes), “Do not go gentle into that good night” (Dylan Thomas), “My Brother At 3 A.M.” (Natalie Diaz), “Myth” (Natasha Trethewey), “nuclear” (Terrance Hayes)

Thursday, October 25 – Workshop Group A

### Week 9

Tuesday, October 30 – Adolescence & Coming of Age

- “Once More to the Lake” (E. B. White), “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” (Joyce Carol Oates), “A&P” (John Updike), “In Umbria” (Jack Gilbert), “First” (Sharon Olds), “Eleven” (Cynthia Cruz), *Cinema Paradiso*

Thursday, November 1 – Workshop Group B

### Week 10

Tuesday, November 6 – Death & Elegy

- “A Rose for Emily” (Faulkner), “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World” (Gabriel García Márquez), “One Art” (Elizabeth Bishop), “On Wanting to Tell [ ] about a Girl Eating Fish Eyes” (Mary Szybist), “Beyond Harm” (Sharon Olds), “The Night Where You No Longer Live” (Meghan O’Rourke), “What The Living Do” (Marie Howe), “Transcript” (Catherine Barnett)

Thursday, November 8 – Workshop Group C

### Week 11

Tuesday, November 13 – Character Development (Fiction Only)

- “Sonny’s Blues” (James Baldwin), “The Beggar Maid” (Alice Munro), “Hills Like White Elephants” (Hemingway), “Janus” (Ann Beattie), “Cat Person” (Kristen Roupenian)

Thursday, November 15 – Workshop Group A

### Week 12

Tuesday, November 20 – Myth, Magic, & Dreams

- “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (Gabriel García Márquez), “Car Crash While Hitchhiking” (Denis Johnson), “A Myth of Devotion” (Louise Glück), “Empire of Dreams” (Charles Simic), “Psyche in Somerville” (Denise Levertov), “Finding Eurydice” (Jack Gilbert),

Thursday, November 22 – No class (Thanksgiving Recess)

### Week 13

Tuesday, November 27 – Questions of Genre

- Excerpts from *Citizen* (Claudia Rankine), excerpts from *Bluets* (Maggie Nelson), “Total Eclipse” (Annie Dillard), “The House of the Dead” (Apollinaire)

Thursday, November 29 – Workshop Group B

### Week 14

Tuesday, December 4 – Description, Odes & Ekphrasis

- “The Things They Carried” (Tim O’Brien), “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (Keats), “I Go Back to May 1937” (Sharon Olds), “To My Twenties” (Kenneth Koch), “Ode to Time” (Pablo Neruda), “The Wilde Woman of Aiken” (Robin Coste Lewis)

Thursday, December 6 – Workshop Group C

### Week 15

Tuesday, December 11 – Influence, Appropriation & Erasure

- “Argos” (Joy Williams), “Leisure, Hannah, Does Not Agree With You (2)” (Hannah Gamble), “Blackacre” (Monica Youn), “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota” (James Wright), “Lying in a Hammock at Blue Mountain Center” (Maureen McLane)

Thursday, December 13 – In-class reading and party