Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry & Fiction
CRWRI-UA.815.002
Location: TBD
Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30 - 4:40 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR: Nadra Mabrouk
EMAIL: nm2467@nyu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Wed. (email for appointment), Thurs. 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

“Instructions for living a life: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.”
Mary Oliver

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

In this introductory course, we will be equally focusing upon the craft and technical elements that make up poetry and fiction, and the practice of writing and workshopping our peers’ creative works using constructive criticism. We will be using different texts to guide our craft conversations. There will also be handouts of a selection of essays, poems and short stories. Students are expected to submit a final portfolio of their revised work at the end of the term. We will learn how to become better readers, and in turn, better writers, by questioning and discussing poems and short stories together. Students are expected to write two response papers regarding your favorite readings and critical responses to your peers’ works. We will hone in on our techniques by writing and revising poems and stories, and have valuable conversations to strengthen our work and that of our peers. We will have a productive term together, doing what we love, and sharing work we deeply care about in a space dedicated to turning us into stronger writers and readers of poetry and fiction. Our class will begin with poetry and then move on to fiction. We will have an art museum field trip and outdoor writing time scheduled. We will fall in love with our writing and the world, we will create, and we will grow together this term.

“The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.”
Sylvia Plath

CLASS STRUCTURE

We will spend the first 30-40 minutes of each class discussing the assigned craft readings. We will then spend 25 minutes discussing the assigned poems or short story. In order to have productive conversations together, I expect everyone to complete the readings and come to class prepared with comments and/or questions. Participation is key in making this course as rich as possible! We will examine pieces and discuss what is/isn’t working and speak to why we feel
this way. By doing so, you will learn more about yourself as a reader and writer, as we will identify their techniques and see how we can use them in our own writing.

Depending on the lesson, we will have short in-class writing assignments. The remainder of the class will be dedicated to workshopping our creative work. We will learn how to examine others’ pieces, identify their purposes, and work together in strengthening them through constructive and thoughtful critique. Remember: this is new work and we are all learning. We are all unique and have something special to bring to our circle this summer.

“Nothing has really happened until it has been described.”
Virginia Woolf

COURSE MATERIALS

Your reading material will be provided to you in handouts.

CONTACT/ CONFERENCES

You may reach me by email. Students are required to meet with me twice over the duration of this course. We will discuss your writing during these meetings, and you may bring more pieces for us to look over together. You may email me the pieces you’d like to discuss beforehand. We may also discuss the assigned readings, and address any other questions you have about the class, writing, revising, and the literary world in general.

“I’m among those who believe a work is never finished, only abandoned.”
Nicole Sealey

POLICIES

Academic Integrity: The university’s policy on plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this course. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the course and you will be reported to the CAS Associate Dean for Students. This course depends upon creative, original thoughts and insights. To read more about the university’s policy on plagiarizing and review them in detail, go to: https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html

Attendance: We have a lot to cover in a short period of time over the course of this summer session. You must be on time, prepared to engage and participate. Our class will only be meeting twelve times this term, and thus, I will not accept any unexcused absences. If you have an emergency, or pre-organized circumstances, you must provide a doctor’s note or discuss with me beforehand. I will only allow one excused absence. An unexcused absence will result in a half letter grade deduction, (an A- will be a B and so on.). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.
Electronics: The use of any and all electronic devices during class is not allowed. You will receive one warning if seen, after which, you will not receive credit for being in class that day.

NYU WELLNESS EXCHANGE

“The Wellness Exchange is your key to accessing the University's extensive health and mental health resources designed to address your needs. You can call a private hotline (212-443-9999), available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which will put you in touch with a professional who can help to address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns. These might include: medical issues, academic stress, depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and other drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections, eating disorders…

The hotline is also available if you just need to talk or want to call about a friend.”

726 Broadway New York, NY 10003
wellness.exchange@nyu.edu

NYU MOSES CENTER

“New York University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified students who disclose their disability to the Moses Center. Reasonable accommodations are adjustments to policy, practice, and programs that level the playing field for students with disabilities and provide equal access to NYU’s programs and activities. Accommodations and other related services are determined on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration each student's disability-related needs and NYU program requirements.” To submit an application and for more information, go to https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html

WORKSHOP SUBMISSIONS

Each student will get the chance to workshop their work at least twice — one poem and one short story. Meeting during office hours will give you the opportunity to discuss more pieces and revisions! The class will be divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. We will workshop one group per class. You must bring in 15 copies of your piece to class.

In addition, you will also be expected to send everyone a copy of your piece via email by Sundays at 6pm. If you do not meet this deadline, you cannot be workshopped. This will give everyone a chance to read your piece beforehand and write a minimum of one page response to it so that we may have an energetic conversation about your work. The response should be thoughtful and honest, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font. Don’t shy from offering praise and stating what worked for you, but also, explain what isn’t working for you and why. Be generous in your responses while keeping in mind craft elements we have discussed. You will bring two copies of the responses to class - one copy for me, the other for your classmate.

Short stories should not exceed 6 pages. Poems should not exceed 3 pages.
RESPONSE PAPERS

In addition to your one-two page responses to your peers’ workshop pieces every week, you are asked to write two response papers over the duration of the term. One will be a response to a poem you admire, the other, to a short story you admire. These papers should be a minimum of 500 words and should contain your exploration of and commentary on technical elements we have discussed from our craft talks.

FINAL PORTFOLIO

This will be a collection of 1-2 short stories and 4 poems. I will be looking at your revision process here, so 2-3 poems should be revised and you should have started working towards revising one of the short stories. This is a chance to hone in on your revision process and improve your work. In addition to the revised pieces, you will turn in a two-page, Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced introduction on how your writing has changed or developed over this course and what you feel still needs a little bit more focus.

GRADING

You will be graded on your effort, participation, thoughtful critiques, and ability to follow the directions.

1) Workshop 25% - You will be graded on effort in your work

2) Attendance, Participation & Workshop Critiques 30% - Your attendance is vital, especially during a summer course. We cannot have a productive class or term without everyone’s participation, enthusiasm, and insight! Your workshop participation and critiques are especially important to the classroom.

3) Response Papers 20% - You will be graded on your thoughtfulness and how closely you engage with the pieces you choose.

4) Final Portfolio 25% - You will be graded on the effort put towards revision and your response paper.