The Fundamentals of Creative Writing

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry
Summer 2019 (Provisional Syllabus)
Summer Session 2 - July 8 - Aug 18
Tuesdays/ Thursdays 1:30pm-4:40pm
Instructor: Wo Chan (they/them)
Contact: wochan.nyc@gmail.com
Office hours: Monday or Wednesday afternoon by appointment in Lillian Vernon House, 58 W 10th Street

Course Objectives
This course is an overview on the fundamentals of creative writing. We will uncover how elements of writing—plot, character, setting, the lyric, repetition, etc.—come together to create a story or poem. We will be reading a selection of poems and stories (and everything in between), and then using this reading as grounds for rigorous in-class discussion. Simultaneously, these readings will inspire prompts for our own creative pieces that we will share and discuss in workshop. It is my hope that this class will equip you with an array of excellent readings that not only display usage of writing fundamentals, but exceed your expectations on what a poem or story can do. As such, we will learn to read both critically and expansively across texts. We will apply this reading acumen to our own work and compassionately to the work of our peers. It is my hope that you leave this class with a greater appreciation for poetry and fiction, and a greater comfort in using these mediums to express the complexities (and wonders) of your own life.

Course Structure
We will meet twice a week, three hours per class with a twenty minute break in between. Half of each class will be dedicated to discussing the assigned texts. We will be looking at different dedicated elements of craft each week. You will be expected to bring a short response to a reading once a week. You will be required to bring in a piece to workshop based on the weekly writing prompts. Workshops will involve everyone reading, annotating, and discussing each other’s work respectfully, compassionately, and curiously. By the end of the semester, students must submit a portfolio, the contents of which are elaborated below. Students are required to give either handwritten or typed responses to their cohorts' submissions. Our course will end with students reading from their portfolios.

Attendance
Please arrive to class on time. As a tip, budget yourself extra time for transit because the trains in the summer can get erratic. Lateness will impact your daily participation grade. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will receive a zero for participation that day. You are allowed one unexcused absence for the semester. After that, your final grade will drop one mark for each unexcused absence (an “A” becomes an “A-,” etc.) An absence is considered excused with a letter from a physician or a similarly official note. If you have an excused absence or will not be present to distribute workshop submissions, please ask classmate to print/bring your submissions for you. If you do not, you will forfeit your workshop slot and your grade will be negatively impacted. Six or more absences will result in automatic failure.

Respectful Space
To create a safe learning environment, we will collectively discuss and create community agreements on the first day of class. This conversation will serve as the basis of how we maintain a respectful and safe learning space.

Grading
Participation - 40% ; Workshop submissions - 30% ; Portfolio- 20% ; Weekly Reading & In-Class Responses 10%

Final Portfolio
Your final portfolio will include all of the work you have handed in over the course of the semester. Here is what you will complete by the end of the semester—
4 workshop pieces
Your weekly reading and workshop responses
In class writing exercises

**Texts**
- Poetry Course reader
- Interviews, audio, and video available online
- Rolling the R’s, R. Zamora Linmark

**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

**WEEK 1: The Big and Little What’s**

**JULY 9, TUESDAY**

Opening Circle & Introductions
Syllabus, Class Policies
Build Community Agreements
Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s,
Group writing exercise
Excerpts from I Remember

**JULY 11, THURSDAY**

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s,
“what you’d find buried in the dirt under charles f. kettering sr. high school”, francine j harris
“Girl” Jamaica Kincaid

Big Group Workshop

**WEEK 2: Character and Voice: Desire as Engine**

**JULY 16, TUESDAY**

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s
“The Husband Stitch”, Carmen Maria Machado
“An Anointing” Thylia’s Moss
“Bird Ave” Lorna Dee Cervantes

WORKSHOP GROUP A

**JULY 18, THURSDAY**

Poetry Course Reader
“The Water that Falls from Nowhere”
“Guilty of Dust”, Frank Bidart
“Venus’ Fly Traps” Yusef Komunyakaa
Self Portraitures

WORKSHOP GROUP B
WEEK 3: Location, Relation, & Interiority

JULY 23, TUESDAY

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s
“Navigators”
“At the Fishhouses”, Elizabeth Bishop
“metromultilingopollonegrocucarachasblahblahblah”, Latasha N Nevada Diggs
“KATHERINE WITH THE LAZY EYE. SHORT. AND NOT A GOOD POET.”, francine j harris

WORKSHOP GROUP A

JULY 25, THURSDAY

Poetry Course Reader
“The Glass Essay,” Anne Carson
Excerpts from Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

WORKSHOP GROUP B

WEEK 4: Structure & Form, Time & Timing

JULY 30, TUESDAY

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s
“Kindness”, YiYun Li

WORKSHOP GROUP A

AUGUST 1, THURSDAY

Poetry Course Reader
“A Temporary Matter” by Jhumpa Lahiri
“A Fantasy” Louise Gluck

WORKSHOP GROUP B

WEEK 5: Secrets, Taboos, The Unknown

AUGUST 6, TUESDAY

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s
“Sign and Symbols,” Vladimir Nabokov
“In the Waiting Room” Bishop
WORKSHOP GROUP A

AUGUST 8, THURSDAY

Poetry Course Reader
“Confessional” Frank Bidart
Sharon Olds poems from The Father

WORKSHOP GROUP B

WEEK 6: Between Genre & Multimedia

AUGUST 13, TUESDAY

Poetry Course Reader
Excerpts from Rolling the R’s
Videos of Latasha N Nevada Diggs
Sounds pieces by Duriel E Harris
Adrian Piper works
Cary Liebowitz paintings
Dora by Jenniffer Tamayo

WORKSHOP GROUP ALL

AUGUST 15, THURSDAY

READING & CELEBRATION

AUGUST 16: Final portfolio & book reviews due by 2pm in my mailbox at Lillian Vernon House.

EXTRA CREDIT

You may submit extra credit for up to a total of 5% of your overall grade. Extra credit consists of doing one the following writer engagement assignments:

1) Attend a literary reading, lecture, or panel. This can be at an academic institution or literary arts institutions. Write one page reflecting on how it will influence your work, the difference between solitary reading and a group event, and generally how you engaged.

2) Choose one poem or story that we read this semester. See if the author is still living and write a reflection in the form of a letter. How did the piece move you? What kind of thoughts did it bring up? Are there are any questions you want to ask the author? Send this letter to the author (I can help you find an email).

3) Memorize and recite a poem of at least 20 lines. Give a dramatic recitation for the class. Please provide me with a copy of the poem ahead of time.

OTHER CLASS POLICIES
TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS
Cell phones, iPods, etc. must be on silent and out of sight. Violating this policy will drop your daily participation grade by a letter grade. If you need to use your phone please let me know. Otherwise, please save it for the mid-class break.

Laptop/Tablet Policy: Laptops and tablets in class can be distracting, both to those using the computer and to others. Class materials such as handouts or readings will be printed and provided beforehand by myself. You are responsible for printing classmates’ and your own poems/stories on workshop days. Note-taking by hand in our writers journals is encouraged, and will benefit our writing practice.

E-MAIL POLICY
Email is the best way to reach me. I am available by email to address questions on assignments, class comments, or emergencies. However, I am less likely to respond after midnight, so please be aware and keep emails timely and professional.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
As a nonsectarian, inclusive institution, NYU policy permits members of any religious group to absent themselves from classes without penalty when required for compliance with their religious obligations. The policy and principles to be followed by students and faculty may be found at The University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays.

MOSES CENTER
Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

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