Fiction Craft Seminar: On Style  
Summer 2019  
Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-5:00

Instructor: Garth Greenwell  
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Style” is something writers talk about a great deal, but often without a clear sense of what we’re talking about. In this Fiction Craft Seminar we’ll try to be as concrete as possible as we consider several of the elements that make up style. In each class, we’ll analyze examples of published writing (all by New York writers and/or set in New York) that demonstrate mastery of style, examining them to see how writers fasten indelible voices to the page. We’ll develop tools for analysis and a vocabulary for discussing style, which I hope will be helpful both as you consider your own writing and as you discuss one another’s stories in workshop. For each class I’ll ask you to produce short assignments of reflective or creative prose, to get you thinking about how style functions in your own creative work, and to give you opportunities to practice the techniques we’ll discuss in class.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Course Reader (Available at Advanced Copy Center, 552 LaGuardia Place)

EXPECTATIONS

  Attendance and Class participation

This is a discussion course, and the primary expectation is that you will arrive in class ready to discuss the assigned reading. For each class, you will read two short stories. This is a substantial amount of sometimes challenging reading, and you will need to manage your time throughout the week in order to come to class sufficiently prepared. (Please don’t try to do all of Tuesday’s reading on Monday night.)

This is an intensive class, and it’s important that you be present for all of our time together. More than one unexcused absence will result in a lower grade. For an absence to be excused, you will need to give me a doctor’s note or other documentation of an emergency situation.

  Written assignments

For each class, I will provide you either a question for reflective writing or a writing prompt. These should result in substantial responses (at least one full typed page, single-spaced), which you will hand in to me. I hope that these assignments will help you think more deeply about how style functions in your own work, and experiment with new stylistic approaches. They will also serve to prepare you for discussions in class.
EVALUATION

Your performance in the craft seminar will be evaluated as follows. Note that you will receive one grade for both the workshop and the craft seminar.

- Class Preparation and Discussion: 50%
- Writing Exercises: 25%
- Reflections: 25%

ACADEMIC HONESTY

It’s true that writers quote, appropriate, and steal. In this course, all writing must be your own. Any attempt to present another writer’s work as your own will be presented to the university as an act of academic dishonesty.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

T 6/4: Introduction

Th 6/6: Grace Paley, “Wants”
        Edwidge Danticat, “Water Child”
        Vladimir Nabokov, “Signs and Symbols”
        Reflection #1

WEEK 2

T 6/11: Henry James, “Story of a Masterpiece”
        Willa Cather, “Paul’s Case”
        Creative assignment #1

         Edith Wharton, “Roman Fever”
         Reflection #2

WEEK 3

T 6/18: Jenny Zhang, “We Love You Crispina”
        Justin Torres, “Reverting to a Wild State”
        Creative assignment #2

Th 6/20: John Cheever, “The World of Apples”
        Donald Antrim, “Another Manhattan”
        Reflection #3
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| T 6/25 | Akhil Sharma, “A Life of Adventure and Delight”  
        | Mary Gaitskill, “Daisy’s Valentine”       | Creative assignment #3             |
| Th 6/27| Jean Stafford, “Children Are Bored on Sunday”  
        | Jamel Brinkley, “J’Ouvert 1996”           | Final Reflection                  |