

**CREATIVE WRITING: INTRODUCTION TO FICTION & POETRY
(CRWRI-UA.815.024)**

Instructor: Scott Bunze
Email: sdb471@nyu.edu
Time: M,W @ 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Location:
Office Hours by Appointment

Course Overview

Hot Sauce. We're going to start with Hot Sauce. Have you ever closed the book and inhaled deeply through your nose, shook your head, and wondered silently to yourself, *How did they do that?* That's Hot Sauce. Hot Sauce is a feeling that lingers after you've stepped away from the page. It's a tingle on our palettes, something that many readers crave but no reader craves the same way. Hot Sauce is what excites us in our reading lives. Hot Sauce is what we'll be talking about for the majority of our time together: how to identify it, how to add it to our own work.

Class Structure:

- Mondays we will devote to workshops. Students will submit work, either a poem or short story, and the class will critique
 - A critique is when students engage their colleagues' work with the greatest attention to detail they can muster, and then deliver a well-intentioned summation of their thoughts on that work. This is to be done with generosity of spirit and care. A young piece of writing, like a young writer, is vulnerable—we're here to make both stronger, not tear them down

- Wednesdays will be a craft discussion. Students will read the assigned work, either a poem, short story, or novel
 - Craft is when we go deeper than the cursory, when we stop reading for pleasure and we start to examine the work's anatomy. Attention to craft is the only means by which we develop our writing tool. I find that my reading brain is like a very dull and rusty knife. It needs daily sharpening or it just won't do its job. Hopefully, we will possess very sharp reading brains by week 2 or 3 and we can use those brains to make each other better

What's Expected of You

- Writing
 - Students will submit work on Wednesdays for the following workshop on Monday. Work should be printed in an acceptable font (Times New Roman, Calibri), 12 pt., double spaced. Submissions should be emailed to the class. Please print a single copy to be submitted to me directly at Wednesday's class
 - Submissions will consist of two pieces of short fiction and two poems. Short fiction should range from 1000-3000 words. They should not exceed 5000. Poetry should fill a page or 2, and not exceed 3
 - **Every student will submit 4 times over the course of the semester**
 - Students will also choose two of their submitted works, one piece of fiction and one poem, to revise. Good writing is good revising. Your revised pieces, along with the rest of your submitted work, will form a **Final Portfolio**

- Feedback
 - Written feedback: Students will write critiques in the form of a letter. **Prior to Monday's class, please print two copies of your critique letter—one for me to review, and one for the writer.**
 - Verbal feedback: **Being part of a workshop means being an active participant in class**

- Reading
 - Prior to each class you'll be reading the selection for our craft discussion as well as the work that your fellow students have submitted ahead of their workshop. **It is imperative that you read your fellow students' work.** If you do not read your peers' work, everyone will know. It will be awkward. Please read your peers' work. Read it deeply and with the same vigor you hope will be applied to your work. Your grade depends on this, so please just do it

- Office Hours
 - At least once per semester, you will come to office hours. These discussions work best following your workshop submission. If your schedule allows, try to meet with me in the week following one of your submissions. I'm generally flexible with regard to time and place for discussions, so email me to set up a time. You are always welcome to meet with me more frequently, and I welcome more in-depth conversations on your work

How You'll Be Graded

Participation: 50%

- You write critiques for your fellow writers, as required
- You contribute to a constructive workshop discussion with generosity of spirit
- You come to class (this one's big)
- You demonstrate to me that you completed assigned craft readings
- You come to class (it bears repeating)

Writing: 40%

- You write stories and poems for workshop, within the parameters of the submission. **Note that this includes submitting on time**

Revision/Final Portfolio: 10%

- You submit your two revised pieces to me at the end of the semester (one from each genre)
- You submit a Final Portfolio

Rules, Regulations, and Preferences

A Brief But Important Note on Plagiarism:

Don't do it. You'll get caught, I'll have to fail you and report you to the university, and it ruins the whole point of the course. Just...don't, OK?

Laptops/phones:

This is not a laptop class. Do not use them in class. Do not use your phone in class. Writing is about engagement. Take this time to be engaged.

Attendance:

Yes, it matters. Show up. After more than one unexcused absence, your grade will drop by a half letter (i.e. from a B to a B-) for each subsequent absence. Being late by more than 15 minutes will count towards half of an unexcused absence; being late by more than 30 minutes, you might as well not come in. That said, things happen. Talk to me in the event that things happen. Do not abuse the happening of things.

A few additional notes:

Disability Disclosure Statement

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

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 726
Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Telephone: 212-998-4980
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Student Wellness Policy

Unless we see explicit evidence in workshop that the speaker of a work is the writer themselves, we assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will likely prompt the instructor's attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting work, especially for workshop, that may be interpreted as such. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me and I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center

Respect

A workshop can become a place of vulnerability for many students. We will seek to cultivate trust in ours, an assumption of positive intent. This can only happen if we respect each other. There is not room for racism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other prejudice that inhibits other students from being themselves. If you feel targeted or uncomfortable at any time, please speak to me privately and I will take the necessary measures to rectify the situation

READING SCHEDULE (subject to change)

I will break students into three groups for poetry and three groups for fiction. Each student will be in two groups, one for poetry and one for fiction. The first submitters (Week 2; Poetry Group A) will not have to submit again until Week 6 (Fiction Group B). Everyone will submit two times and nobody will submit back to back. We can further clarify this in person.

1. Ocean Vuong

M, Jan. 27: Introductions, Determine Submission Groups
W, Jan. 29: Selections from *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*.
Class discussion: Juxtaposition, Trauma

2. George Saunders/Lorrie Moore

M, Feb. 3: Poetry Workshop Group A Submission Due
W, Feb. 5: Saunders; *jon*, *Escape From Spidershead*, *Home*.
Moore; *How To Become A Writer*.
Class discussion theme: Efficiency, Voice; Science Fiction 1.

3. Tracy K. Smith

M, Feb. 10: Fiction Workshop Group A Submissions Due
W, Feb. 12: Selections from *Life on Mars*.
Class discussion: The Unexpected; Science Fiction 2.

- 4. Nana Kwame Adjiyeh Brenyah/ Haruki Murakami**
M, Feb. 17: NO CLASS
W, Feb. 19: Nana; *Finkelstein Five, The Hospital Where, Through The Flash*
Murakami; *Kino, Barn Burning*.
Class discussion: Surrealism, Dystopia; Structure, Clarity; Science Fiction 3.
- 5. Terrance Hayes**
M, Feb. 24: Poetry Workshop Group B
W, Feb. 26: Selections from *Lighthouse*.
Class discussion: Politics and Places; Forms
- 6. Jhumpa Lahiri/Raymond Carver**
M, March 2: Fiction Workshop Group B
W, March 4: Lahiri; *A Temporary Matter, Sexy*.
Carver; *Are These Actual Miles*.
Class Discussion: Hot Sauce! Callbacks.
- 7. William Carlos Williams/W.B Yeats or R. M. Rilke**
M, March 9: Poetry Workshop Group C
W, March 11: Selections
Class Discussion: Images and Ideas
- 8. Spring Break**
M, March 16: No Class (But please start *Goon Squad*)
W, March 18: No Class
- 9. Jennifer Egan**
M, March 23: Fiction Workshop Group C
W, March 25: *A Visit From the Goon Squad*
Class Discussion: What is a novel?
- 10. Anne Carson**
M, March 30: Poetry Workshop Group A
W, April 1: *Short Talks*
Class Discussion: What is a poem?
- 11. Wells Tower/Richard Yates**
M, April 6: Fiction Workshop Group A
W, April 8: Selections
Class Discussion: Heroes. Stealing and Influence.
- 12. Yusef Komunyakaa**

M, April 13: Poetry Workshop Group B
W, April 15: Selections from *Chameleon Couch*
Class discussion: Musicality

13. Kafka/Borges

M, April 20: Fiction Workshop Group B
W, April 22: Kafka; *The Hunger Artist*, *Great Wall of China*
Borges; *Garden of Forking Paths*
Class discussion: Surrealism. What's behind the story?

14. Michael Ondaatje

M, April 27: Poetry Workshop Group C
W, April 29: Selections from *Rat Jelly*
Class Discussion:

15. Denis Johnson/Annie Proulx

M, May 4: Fiction Workshop Group C
W, May 6: Johnson; *Work, Dun Dun, Emergency*
Proulx; *Mud Below, Half-Skinned Steer*
Class Discussion: Great big out there. Bringing news. Precision.

16. Final Portfolios

M, May 11: Wrap up