

The job of the art, it seems to me, is to not leave you
where it found you. —LUCILLE CLIFTON

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING
SPRING 2020 CRWRI-UA.815.010
TUESDAY/THURSDAY 9:30 AM - 10:45 AM
SASHA DEBEVEC MCKENNEY (SDM504@NYU.EDU)
OFFICE HOURS WED AM.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class is an introduction to the practice of creative writing. Students will become better readers, writers, and members of the writing community.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Khadijah Queen, *I'm So Fine*

I will either upload pdfs or print copies of stories/essays/poems by writers like: Jennifer Egan, Lorrie Moore, Jamel Brinkley, George Saunders, Donald Barthelme, Flannery O'Connor, Lydia Davis, Nafissa Thompson-Spires, Robert Caro, Maggie Nelson, Claudia Rankine, Lucille Clifton, Morgan Parker, Rachel Zucker, John Ashbery, Dean Young, Terrance Hayes, Elizabeth Bishop, Ross Gay, Sharon Olds, and more.

GRADING

ATTENDANCE (10%) Come to class! Coming more than 15 minutes late counts as an absence. On your third absence, your letter grade will drop (like, A to A-).

WORKSHOP (50%) In order to make the workshop a place where real creative growth can happen, we must all respect and care for each other. The purpose of this class is to take writing seriously, and to learn how to take yourself seriously as a writer. Attendance is especially on workshop days, when your classmates have spent their personal time reading your work. Your short stories (7% each) and poems (7% each) should be the culmination of time spent observing, listening, thinking, taking notes, writing and revising. Having people read your work is a rare, beautiful, exciting privilege. If you bring in rushed work, you are disrespecting your classmates and their time, and you are wasting an opportunity to be workshopped. As a reader in the workshop, you should fully engage with everyone's work—in the same way you would hope they would engage with yours. This means reading the story or poem more than once and taking notes on the printed copy. Pointing out what you like about the piece, asking questions about what you may not understand, and what the experience of reading the piece was like (what did you feel? And when?). These typed responses (15%) can be short, they can be a list, they can be a direct letter, and will be handed in both to me and back to the writer.

READING RESPONSES (10%) Show me that you did the reading. Likes, dislikes, questions, problems, what it reminded you of, what you think the story is doing in regards to the theme of the week. (Reading responses are only required for the fiction half of the class.)

PRESENTATION (10%) A short presentation on a poet (we will choose the poet together, and it will be somebody you like, I promise) and a few of their poems. Read us one of their poems out loud and tell us why you loved it.

REVISION (20%) Follow through with your work and care about making it the best it can be. At the end of the class, you will turn in revised versions of two stories and two poems. The new versions of the works will have taken into consideration what we said in the workshop, but by no means do you need to change what everyone says to change. Hone your voice, images, syntax through revision. Make the work better, and more your own.

EXTRA CREDIT (UP TO 5%) Attending readings (the NYU Creative Writing Department hosts readings throughout the semester at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House at 58 W 10th—and the city in general is full of readings everywhere, every night) and writing a short response or attending office hours (a second time) with real questions about writing in general or about revising your stories and poems.

DISABILITY DISCLOSURE STATEMENT & STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY

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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, the second floor at 726 Broadway, or nyu.edu/csd.

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, I am absolutely here to help you. The NYU Wellness Center (wellness.exchange@nyu.edu) 24 Hour Hotline is (212) 443-9999, and they can be found at 726 Broadway.

MISCELLANEOUS

No laptops unless you need one. Print everything that is not printed for you. Bring a pen everywhere you go. No plagiarism. Meet with me at least once before March 12.

THE WORLD IS A PLACE TO BUY THINGS. RESIST. —RACHEL ZUCKER

CLASS SCHEDULE

SO INCREDIBLY SUBJECT TO CHANGE

WEEK ONE

TUESDAY JAN 28

INTRODUCTIONS
EXPECTATIONS
WRITING EXERCISE

THURSDAY JAN 30

I TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT: "THE BASICS"
DISCUSS: "FOUND OBJECTS" (EGAN), "THE AMERICAN MALE AT AGE 10" (ORLEAN)

WEEK TWO

TUESDAY FEB 4

I TALK MORE ABOUT: THE CANON (BRIEF) & POV
DISCUSS: "CAT PERSON" (ROUPENIAN), "CAR CRASH WHILE HITCHHIKING" (JOHNSON)
DUE: PROFILE OF YOURSELF/FRIEND/FAMILY/ANIMAL/CHARACTER (2 PGS)
FAKE WORKSHOP

THURSDAY FEB 6

TALK: PLOT
DISCUSS: "EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE" (O'CONNOR), "THE SCHOOL"
(BARTHELME), "THE HEADS OF COLORED PEOPLE" (THOMPSON-SPIRES)
DUE: RESPOND TO THE READING (1-2 PGS)
DUE: WORKSHOP A (3-5 PGS)

WEEK THREE

TUESDAY FEB 11

WORKSHOP A

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)
DUE: WORKSHOP B (3-5 PGS)

THURSDAY FEB 13

WORKSHOP B

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)
DUE: WORKSHOP C (3-5 PGS)

WEEK FOUR

TUESDAY FEB 18

WORKSHOP C

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

THURSDAY FEB 20

TALKING ABOUT: CHARACTERS

DISCUSS: "BULLET IN THE BRAIN" (WOLF), "GIRL" (KINCAID), "A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND" (O'CONNOR)

DUE: RESPOND TO THE READING (1-2 PGS)

DUE: WORKSHOP A (8-10 PGS)

WEEK FIVE

TUESDAY FEB 25

TODAY WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SETTING

DISCUSS: "SAD IRONS" (CARO), "J'OUVERT" (BRINKLEY), "THE LESSON" (BAMBARA)
"ZIMMER LAND" (ADJEI-BRENYAH)

DUE: RESPOND TO THE READING (1-2 PGS)

DUE: WORKSHOP B (8-10 PGS)

THURSDAY FEB 27

WORKSHOP A

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK SIX

TUESDAY MAR 3

TALKING: VOICE AND HUMOR

DISCUSS: SELECTIONS FROM *TENTH OF DECEMBER* (SAUNDERS)

THURSDAY MAR 5

WORKSHOP B

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

DUE: WORKSHOP C

WEEK SEVEN

TUESDAY MAR 10

WE WILL TALK ABOUT HOW ACTUALLY ANYTHING CAN BE A STORY

DISCUSS: SELECTIONS FROM *CAN'T AND WON'T* (DAVIS), "NEAR THE END OF THE SYMPHONY STRIKE" (BACHELDER), "ESPECIALLY HEINOUS: 272 VIEWS OF *LAW & ORDER SVU*" (MARIA-MACHADO)

DUE: RESPOND TO THE READING (1-2 PGS)

THURSDAY MAR 12

WORKSHOP C

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

DUE: REVISION OF YOUR FIRST SHORT STORY (3-5 PGS)

DISCUSSING: THE SEMESTER SO FAR

"WEEK EIGHT" (SPR*NG BRK)**

When we come back we move to poems! Maybe: Go to a museum and write some stuff down?? What is different about the place you're in? Are your dreams different? How does your body feel? Go on a walk?? Do 20 mins of yoga? Imagine your life as a writer with no other classes? How will your life be different next week? What will you miss about this week? What do you miss about last week right now?

WEEK NINE

TUESDAY MAR 24

WHAT IS A POEM?

POETRY IS REALLY NOT THAT BIG OF A DEAL (TEN POEMS I LOVE)

DISCUSS: "THE EDUCATION OF THE POET" (GLÜCK)

WRITING EXERCISES (CHILL)

THURSDAY MAR 26

"TECHNICAL" "TERMS" AND SOUND

DISCUSS: *I'M SO FINE* (QUEEN)

DUE: FIVE PRIMAL STORIES, TEN IMAGES, TEN THINGS YOU BELIEVE

DUE: WORKSHOP POEMS

WEEK TEN

TUESDAY MAR 31

WORKSHOP A

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

THURSDAY APR 2

WORKSHOP B

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK ELEVEN

TUESDAY APR 7

LYRIC VS. NARRATIVE

DISCUSS: OLDS, ZUCKER, HAYES, GAY, ASHBURY, BARNETT

PRESENTATION (3 MINS)

DUE: WORKSHOP A

THURSDAY APR 9

WORKSHOP A

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK TWELVE

TUESDAY APR 14

STRUCTURE, ANAPHORA, FORM

DISCUSS: BISHOP, VUONG, JUNGMIN YOON, YOUNG, BROOKS, LOZADO-OLIVA
PRESENTATION (3 MINS)

DUE: WORKSHOP B

THURSDAY APR 16

WORKSHOP B

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK THIRTEEN

TUESDAY APR 21

VOICE: LOUD, QUIET, LOUD

DISCUSS: PARKER, CLIFTON

PRESENTATION (3 MINS)

DUE: WORKSHOP A

THURSDAY APR 23

WORKSHOP A

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK FOURTEEN

TUESDAY APR 28

WITNESSING

DISCUSS: KOMUNYAKAA, STEIN, JORDAN, SHARIF, RANKINE

DUE: WORKSHOP B

THURSDAY APR 30

WORKSHOP B

DUE: RESPOND TO THE WRITERS (1-2 PGS)

WEEK FIFTEEN

TUESDAY MAY 5

PLACE & PASTORAL

DISCUSS: PICO, AMMONS, KELLY, BRYANT VOIGT, O'HARA, ABDURRAQIB

PRESENTATION (3 MINS)

THURSDAY MAY 7

PRACTICE READING YOUR OWN WORK OUTLOUD, STANDING UP

REVISION CHECK IN/LAST MINUTE QUESTIONS

“WEEK SIXTEEN”

TUESDAY MAY 11

DO: HANG

EAT: FOOD

DUE: NICE THINGS ABOUT EACH OTHER

MAKE A LITTLE WRITING PLAN FOR THE SUMMER?