

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry
CRWRI-UA 815 012

Instructor: Hilda Davis

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Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM

Location: To Be Determined

Office Hours: By appointment at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House (58 W 10th St).

CLASS OVERVIEW

The objective of this class is in the name of the class! My goal is to introduce students to the craft aspect of both poetry and fiction. This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to both poetry and fiction through weekly reading assignments, class discussions, and a safe space that allows students to read and critique the work of assigned writers, as well as produce their own pieces of creative writing.

As a class, we will work through what makes a poem or a piece of fiction function well. We will also look into the different devices and techniques that poets and authors use in their work. This class will also introduce you to the workshop model, where you will have the opportunity to submit your own work for your peers to review. It is my hope that you will feel confident in transferring the craft aspects of the assigned readings into your own writing. The first half of the semester will be focused on poetry, and the second half will be focused on prose and fiction. Tuesday class sessions will be devoted to craft (with in-class writing exercises), and Thursday class sessions will be devoted to workshop. Please note that laptops, cell phones and tablets are not allowed in class.

READINGS & RESPONSES

Each week, students are expected to read the assigned readings prior to class. The selections on the reading list are made to reflect a wide range of voices, backgrounds, and writing styles.

Each Tuesday, students will submit a response to the assigned reading. These responses should be one page long, 12-point font, and double spaced. Your responses should not exceed two double spaced pages. The expectation of reading responses is for students to analyze what makes each piece work well or not work well, and to compare at least two of the different readings for the week, to one another. While a part of reading is understanding whether you enjoy a piece, it is important that your responses are not just an opinion piece (re: what you like or dislike about the assigned reading), but that it also includes what functions are at play throughout the piece.

WORKSHOP EXPECTATIONS

On Thursdays, we will workshop in alternating groups. The goal for workshops in this course is for students to write as openly and honestly as they would like to within the parameters of the workshop assignments. Because writing is often a vulnerable experience, it is important for me as the professor, and for students, to be as understanding and supportive in the classroom environment as possible. What will guide our workshop experiences is not what we “liked” or “disliked” about a person’s work. What we will focus on is our overall experience with the work. It is important that we focus on the strengths of a piece first, then transition into suggestions

afterward. Workshop experiences are the most fruitful when they offer constructive criticism to their members. Because of this, it is important for all students to be willing to offer and receive feedback. It is also important to keep an open mind to embrace new ideas concerning your own writing and writing in general. Workshop in this course is a space where students will be encouraged to explore different possibilities in their own writing and the writing of their peers.

CLASS READINGS and MATERIALS

In lieu of students having to purchase books or materials for the course, all readings and materials will be provided in class, or will be made available electronically on NYU Classes. Readings provided on NYU Classes are expected to be printed out prior to the class session that they are assigned.

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage every student to come to office hours at least once a semester. An ideal time to come is after your work has been workshopped so we can discuss how your experience was and if you have any concerns or questions.

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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, at 726 Broadway (2nd floor), or at www.nyu.edu/csd.

STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY

Unless there is 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.

GRADING

Attendance and Class Participation (30%)

Students are permitted two unexcused absences. Your grade will be reduced by one degree of a letter (i.e., A to A-) for any additional unexcused absences. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, it will be considered an absence. In order to foster a safe space throughout the semester, it is vital that every student makes meaningful contributions to class discussions. As members of this classroom community, students are expected to be present in every class session, and to offer thoughtful and honest insights on the assigned texts, as well as the fiction and poetry produced by other students. This means coming to each class session having read assigned text and bringing a copy with you, handing in your craft assignments on-time, engaging in critical and polite discussion about the text in front of you; providing written and oral feedback for your peers; scheduling and attending the (2) required office hours. If I feel you are falling short in any of these areas, I will let you know privately via e-mail. If this happens, please don't take it as my

judgment against your capabilities as a student. I am invested in every student getting as much as they can out of this class, and I look forward to every student bringing their best. If you believe that you may have any issue arriving to class on time or have any other concerns about fulfilling class expectations, please send me an e-mail so that I am aware of what is going on for you.

Reading Responses (20%)

At the end of class on Tuesdays, you will be expected to submit a response to the assigned reading for that day. These responses should be one page long, 12-point font, and double-spaced. Students are free to hold on to responses as a guide during class discussion, but responses **MUST** be submitted before the end of class. If you foresee any issues with submitting your work on time, please send me an e-mail in advance of our class session.

Literary Event Attendance and Response (15%)

Throughout the course of the semester, students are expected to attend at least one literary event. Students are responsible for writing a two page long, 12-point font, and double-spaced review of their experience, to be submitted in the immediate class session following the literary event. I will provide heads-ups on upcoming readings, but students are responsible for finding and attending literary events on their own.

Final Portfolio (35%)

Instead of taking a final exam in this course, students will be asked to provide a portfolio of work on the last day of classes for me to review. This final portfolio will include all writing assignments, all original drafts, your revised and polished workshop pieces, as well as an artist statement, which should be one to three double spaced pages. The artist statement should include what is important to you about revising, editing, writing, reading, and observation as it comes to your personal writing practice.

Submission Policy

All responses, exercises, workshop submissions must be turned in on the assigned deadline, in class. It is your responsibility to have photocopies of your workshop piece available in the session preceding your workshop. Email submissions will only be accepted in the event of an excused absence.

Plagiarism

There is a zero-tolerance plagiarism policy in this course. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department, without exception.

Class Schedule

***Please note that some readings are subject to change.**

Week 1, Introductions and Review of the Syllabus/What Is Writing, Really?

Tuesday, January 28

In-Class Reading Exercise: "How to Become a Writer Or, Have You Earned This Cliché?" by Lorrie Moore

Thursday, January 30

In-Class Reading Exercise: “Why the Novel Matters” by D.H. Lawrence, Letters to a Young Poet (selections) by Rainer Maria Rilke, The Art of Daring: Risks, Restlessness and Imagination (selections) by Carl Philips

Week 2, The Driving Power of Form, Sound, and Metaphor in Poetry

Tuesday, February 4

“Fame Food and Liquor” by Nate Marshall, “I Wandered As Lonely As a Cloud” by William Wordsworth, “The Language” by Robert Creeley, “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” by Terrance Hayes, “Heartbeats” by Melvin Dixon, “Ode to the Maggot” by Yusef Komunyakaa, “Those Winter Sundays” and “Full Moon” by Robert Hayden, “Object Permanence” by Nicole Sealey, “The Wild Iris” by Louise Gluck

Thursday, February 6

Workshop A

Week 3, Persona Poems

Tuesday, February 11

Selections from *The Big Smoke* by Adrian Matejka, “Siren Song” by Margaret Atwood, “Hottentot Venus” by Morgan Parker, “Kyrie Irving Explains the Flat Earth” by Yalie Kamara, “Ludwig van Beethoven’s Return to Vienna” by Rita Dove

Thursday, February 13

Workshop B

Week 4, On Ekphrasis

Tuesday, February 18

“Gravity” by Angel Nafis, “Replica of ‘The Thinker’” by Matthew Olzmann, “How to Make Pancakes” by Ciara Miller, “On Seeing Larry Rivers’ ‘Washington Crossing the Delaware’ at the Museum of Modern Art” by Frank O’Hara, “Aubade With Burning City” by Ocean Vuong, “Blood Aubade, 1969” by Mitchell LH Douglas

Thursday, February 20

Workshop C

Week 5, On Survival

Tuesday, February 25

“Some Girls Survive on Their Sorcery Alone” by Thiahera Nurse, “kitchenette building” by Gwendolyn Brooks, “Won’t You Celebrate with Me” by Lucille Clifton, “Litany for Survival” by Audre Lorde, “Thank God I Can’t Drive” by Camonghne Felix, “Bodies Like Oceans” by Omotara James, “What Resembles the Grave but Isn’t” by Anne Boyer

Thursday, February 27

Workshop A

Week 6, The Art of the Elegy

Tuesday, March 3

“A Small Needful Fact” by Ross Gay, “it won’t be a bullet”, and “dream where every Black person is standing by the ocean” by Danez Smith, “Funeral for the Black Dog” by Morgan Parker, “Elegy” by Aracelis Girmay, “Another Elegy” by Jericho Brown, “Special Orders” by Edward Hirsch, *Duino Elegies* (The First) by Rainier Maria Rilke

Thursday, March 5
Workshop B

Week 7, On Joy

Tuesday, March 10
“Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude” by Ross Gay, “Ah, Ah” by Joy Harjo

Thursday, March 12
Workshop C

Tuesday, March 17 and Thursday, March 19
NO CLASSES, SPRING BREAK, ENJOY YOURSELVES!

Week 8, Hybrid Texts

Tuesday, March 24
I & II from *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine
Cane (selections) by Jean Toomer

Thursday, March 26
Workshop A

Week 9, Science Fiction/Fantasy

Tuesday, March 31
“Bloodchild” by Octavia Butler, “The Nine Billion Names of God” by Arthur C. Clarke, “The Lion and the Spider” by Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Thursday, April 2
Workshop B

Week 10, On Childhood/Coming of Age

Tuesday, April 7
“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid, “Day of Rest” by Raven Leilani

Thursday, April 9
Workshop C

Week 11, Radical Self Love as a Part of Literary Practice

Tuesday, April 14
Invited Lecturer, TBA

Thursday, April 16

Workshop A

Week 12, Through a Woman's Lens

Tuesday, April 21

Sula (selections) by Toni Morrison, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

Thursday, April 23

Workshop B

Week 13, On the Importance of Revision

Tuesday, April 28

"Necessary Cuts", Rickey Laurentiis, In-class Reflection, and Chapbook Compilation.

Thursday, April 30

Workshop C

Week 14, "CELEBRATE GOOD TIMES, COME ON!"

Tuesday, May 5

Final class party and reading

Thursday, May 7

Submission of a physical copy of your final portfolio by 6 PM to me directly, or in my mailbox at the Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House (58 W. 10th St).