

INTRODUCTION TO FICTION AND POETRY
CRWRI-UA.815.015
TUES/THURS 3:30 PM - 4:45 PM
25 W 4TH ST, ROOM C-16

INSTRUCTOR: JD DEBRIS (PLEASE, CALL ME J.D.)
JDD430@NYU.EDU

OFFICE HOURS:
*****MUST EMAIL FIRST TO CONFIRM*****
TUES/THURS 1:30-3:00 PM
LILLIAN VERNON HOUSE, 58 W 10TH ST, NEW YORK, NY 10012

“To sing you must first open your mouth. You must have a pair of lungs, and a little knowledge of music. It is not necessary to have an accordion, or a guitar. The essential thing is to want to sing. This then is a song. I am singing.”
-Henry Miller

“The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say.”
-Anaïs Nin

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

We’re going to do what poets and fiction writers do. The four basic steps are:

- To read voraciously and let it directly inform our writing
- To get our hands dirty with raw and uninhibited first drafts
- To polish these first drafts via processes of revision
- Having written and revised, read again

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Larry Levis – Winter Stars
(avail. as free e-book on JHU Project Muse)

Lucia Berlin – A Manual for Cleaning Women
(e-book avail. as free loan through NYPL)

CLASS STRUCTURE:

Tuesdays: Craft / Submissions Due
Thursdays: Workshop

- In **CRAFT** classes we will discuss the week's readings (listed below). Most weeks, readings will be posted as .pdf files to the NYU Classes site. We will also read a complete book of poems and a complete book of stories.

Your homework for every Tuesday is this: read the assigned readings, read the poems at least twice, mark them up (or make a notes doc) noting elements of the reading that stand out to you, then come up with **three prompts** based on the readings (some element from the reading that you—or someone else—might use as a launching point for your own writing). Come to class Tuesday ready to exchange prompts and notes with classmates. **These prompts will be fueling your workshop pieces.**

*** * * If it is your week to workshop, then upload your piece to the FORUMS section of our NYU CLASSES page by Tuesday at noon. * * ***

- In **WORKSHOP** classes we will discuss classmates' writing. There will be three/four workshop groups, who will take turns bringing pieces to workshop each week (each week's workshopers **must upload their submissions—original pieces of writing which originate from the reading-based prompts—on NYU Classes by the preceding Tuesday at noon.**

Your homework for every Thursday is this: If it's your turn to workshop, upload your piece by Tuesday at noon. Print out the pieces your classmates submit to the class site, read them, read them again, mark them up noting elements of the reading that stand out to you. Come to class Thursday ready to exchange notes and engage in discussion with classmates.

GRADING:

Three steps: Write, read, and show up.

25% Workshop submissions:

All this means is turn something in when it's your week to workshop and you're good. Workshop submissions will be graded on effort, not quality. When it's your turn to workshop, please submit either one poem, one piece of flash fiction, or 2-7 pages of a short story (excerpts of 7+ page short stories are fine, but novel excerpts won't be acceptable for workshop and won't count as a submission).

25% Notes/Prompts:

Mark up your printed-out papers in a way that shows your thought process about the piece. Have three prompts based on the reading ready every Tuesday. Have annotations of classmates' workshop pieces ready every Thursday.

25% Attendance, Preparation, and Discussion:

Come to class having read the week's assigned reading and be ready to talk about it in a group. You are allowed one unexcused absence. Three late arrivals to class (over 10 mins late) will count as an absence.

25% Final Revised Portfolio:

...consisting of at least one story and one poem. Include notes on your revision process.

LATE WORK:

A creative writing class relies on writers showing up and having read/submitted the work.

Even if you feel like you're not understanding the reading, just note patterns you detect.

If you feel like you're stuck on a piece you're writing, just focus on making a poem-shaped thing or a story-shaped thing. Disregard quality for a minute and just trust the poem or story to take shape—rough drafts are supposed to be rough!

This is all to say: turn *something* in. You're going to get the same grade for that cyberpunk retelling of "Grandma got Run Over by a Reindeer" where you can't seem to nail the opening, middle, or ending as you would for writing a gargantuan, sprawling successor to *The Waste Land*.

So turn it in: the worst thing you can read or write is nothing. **Late poems and stories will not be accepted.** You can always revise a piece after the due date.

I know what it's like to be overworked. If you're feeling the crunch, please let me know one-on-one and we will adapt as necessary.

OTHER POLICIES:

- **Tardiness** of more than 10 minutes will be considered an absence. We have a short window of time for workshop and don't really have time to sit around waiting to start.
- Please **no phones**. Open laptops and tablets may only be used for reading relevant pdfs and/or e-books. Any violation of this policy will result in a **full electronics ban for the whole class**. This means that **everyone** will have to print out all the craft readings every week and **heartlessly murder** millions of trees. Think of your peers! Think of the trees! Turn off your wi-fi and stay focused, please.
- **Plagiarism** = Grade of "F." Homage is great. Claiming someone else's work as yours is corny.
- Please be **respectful** of classmates at all times. Sharing work can be tough for some writers, so be cognizant of this when offering feedback.
- Always check the **Resources** section of our **NYU CLASSES** page for the week's readings. There will be respective folders for required reading and optional reading. Prompts may be created based on readings in either folder (visual art pieces I upload are fair game for prompts as well).

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
Website: <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.

READINGS:**UNIT 1 - MEMORY (2 classes)****(30 Jan, 4 Feb)*****NO WORKSHOP 1st TWO WEEKS* *CONSECUTIVE CRAFT DAYS INSTEAD*****THURS 30 JAN 20**

- Yusef Komunyakaa – Venus' Flytraps, Gerry's Jazz
- David Berman – Classic Water
- Karisma Price – July 2008
- John Porcellino – Heat Lightning (comic strip)
- César Vallejo – To My Brother Miguel, In Memoriam

Pierre Bonnard – Selected works (paintings)

TUES 4 FEB 20

- Jamel Brinkley – I Happy Am

- Roberto Bolaño – The Grub
- Marie Howe – Practicing
- Mario Santiago Papasquiaro – Leap Year Adolescence
- Arthur Rimbaud – Novel

Hughie Lee-Smith – Selected works (paintings)

- OPTIONAL: James Merrill – The Broken Home
- OPTIONAL: Frank Stanford – Memory is like a Shotgun Kicking You Near the Heart
- **UNIT 2 - COMPLICATING THE “I”**

THURS 6 FEB ‘20

- Jorge Luis Borges – Borges & I
- Cynthia Cruz – Self Portrait
- Atilla Jozsef – Atilla Jozsef
- Fernando Pessoa – “Countless Lives...”
- Sam Sax – Lisp
- César Vallejo – Black Stone on a White Stone

TUES 11 FEB ‘20

- Julio Cortázar – Axolotl
- Forugh Farrokhzad – O Bejeweled Realm
- John Murillo – On Confessionalism
- Hieu Minh Nguyen - Confessional
- Bertolt Brecht – Of Poor B.B.
- Jack Giaour – Trans Man in Spring; T.M. in October

Ana Mendieta – from *Siluetas* and *Body on Glass* (images)

Tues 11 Feb: Group A submissions due

Thurs 13 Feb: Group A Workshops

UNIT 3 - LISTS & NEGATION (TUES 18 Feb ‘20)

- Clarice Lispector – The Fifth Story
- David Shields – Life Story
- Etgar Keret – Fungus
- David St. John – Guitar
- Marie Howe – Magdalene and the Seven Devils

- Aimé Césaire – Ex-voto for a Shipwreck
- Luca Argel – O Número Zero

Hélio Oiticica – from *Tropicália* and *Metaesquema* (images)

- OPTIONAL: Joe Lansdale – Godzilla’s 12 Step Program

Tues 18 Feb: Group B submissions due

Thurs 20 Feb: Group B workshops

UNIT 4 – Berlin – from *A Manual for Cleaning Women* (25 Feb, 3 Mar, 10 Mar) See NYU CLASSES for assigned stories

Tues 25 Feb: Group C submissions due

Thurs 27 Feb: Group C workshops

Tues 3 Mar: Group A submissions due

Thurs 5 Mar: Group A workshops

Tues 10 Mar: Group B Submissions Due

Thurs 12 Mar: Group B workshops

16 MAR-22 MAR – SPRING BREAK 4EVA

UNIT 5 (TASTE, SCENT, AND INCANTATION) (TUES 24 Mar ‘20)

- Tatyana Tolstaya – Aspic
- Derek Walcott – A Sea Chantey
- Lucille Clifton – Cutting Greens
- Paul Celan – Deathfugue (w/ audio)
- Nicolás Guillén – Sensemayá
- Arthur Sze – Fauve
- Bei Dao – Midnight Singer; The Orange is Ripe
- Mahmoud Darwish – Lesson from the Kama Sutra

Maya Deren – Selected works (video)

Mikhail Vrubel – Selected works (paintings)

Tues 24 Mar: Group C Submissions Due

Thurs 26 Mar: Group C Workshops

UNIT 7 - Levis – from *Winter Stars* (31 Mar, 7 Apr)

See NYU CLASSES for which sections of book to read

Tues 31 Mar: Group A Submissions Due

Thurs 2 Apr: Group A Workshops

Tues 7 Apr: Group B Submissions Due

Thurs 9 Apr: Group B Workshops

UNIT 8 (CHARACTER & PERSONA) (2 wks)

TUES 14 APR '20

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – Apollo
- Carlos Drummond de Andrade - Disappearance of Luisa Porto
- Sappho – Charaxos and Larichos

Khalik Allah – from *Souls Against the Concrete* (photos)

TUES 21 APR '20

- Haruki Murakami – Yesterday
- Terrance Hayes – The Blue Kool; “Maxine Waters...”
- Major Jackson – Mighty Pawns
- Ezra Pound – Sestina: Altaforte (w/ audio)
- Mike Tyson – “I’m the best ever” (video)

Romare Bearden – Selected works (mixed media)

- OPTIONAL: Sterling A. Brown – Slim Greer in Hell
- OPTIONAL: René Depestre – from *A Rainbow for the Christian West*

Tues 14 Apr: Group C Submissions Due

Thurs 16 Apr: Group C Workshops

Tues 21 Apr: Group A Submissions Due

Thurs 23 Apr: Group A Workshops

UNIT 9 (COMMUNITY)

TUES 28 APR '20

- Denis Johnson – Strangler Bob
- Italo Calvino – from *Invisible Cities*
- Kevin Young – Eddie Priest’s Barbershop & Notary
- Edward Hirsch – Execution

- David Hernandez – All-American
- Catullus – 37

OPTIONAL: George Oppen – Red Hook: December

OPTIONAL: Pablo Neruda – Walking Around; Fable of the Mermaid and the Drunks

OPTIONAL: Zbigniew Herbert – What Mr. Cogito Thinks About Hell

OPTIONAL: CK Williams – She, Though

Nicole Eisenman – Selected works (paintings)

Salman Toor – Selected works (paintings)

Tues 28 Apr: Group B Submissions Due

Thurs 30 Apr: Group B Workshops

*****Tues 5 May COLD READ WORKSHOP: (Group C brings in work and we workshop without having read it beforehand)**

7 May: Final Portfolio Reading & Salon (Final Portfolio Due)