Introduction to Prose & Poetry
CRWRI-UA.815.015

Hannah Sassoon
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Class: Tue/Thu 12:30-1:45
Office hours: Thu 10:30-12:00 and by appt.

This workshop is a place to play—with voice, language, form, structure. We'll be reading texts across genres, training our eyes and ears on how they're made, and writing our own pieces of prose and poetry. We'll experiment with different tools. We'll share our work and learn from each other. What you write about is up to you. Your eye is your own. Your mind is your searchlight.

Format

Think tandem.

Reading
Literary genres will not be divided in this course. We’ll read poetry, prose (mostly nonfiction), and hybrid forms alongside each other. On Tuesdays we’ll devote our attention to readings, most of which will be short so that we can tend to them thoroughly. Through in-class discussion, we’ll build our critical vocabulary and learn to unravel how a piece is working. Close reading is our chance to study materials, techniques, and textures. It will help sharpen our senses and hone our sensibilities.

Writing
In tandem with reading, you’ll also be writing. For the first part of the semester, you’ll turn in short pieces every week (mix of genres); later we’ll shift to every other week so you have more time to develop your ideas. At the end of the semester, each of you will assemble a small portfolio.

Workshop
We will read each other’s writing throughout the semester. Thursdays we’ll devote our attention to student pieces on a rotating schedule (three per class). This weekly workshop is at the heart of the course: it’s where we will come to know each other’s voices and minds and respond to each other’s creative work. We will all contribute to generous, generative, respectful discussion. The occasion to offer thoughtful critical and editorial comments—and to receive them—is a privilege more rich and rare than you might think.
Coursework

Writing — due by Thursday midnight
You will generate a range of pieces and poems—weekly at first, then every other week. I will offer prompts, constraints, and ideas, but what you write about is up to you. You are free. This is a place to play—to try on voices and forms, to let your mind range, to write into uncertainty. Risks are encouraged. Follow inquiry. Turn stones. Turn corners. Around midterm, and again toward the end of the semester, you’ll have a chance to revise some of your work. Upload all writing, on time, to our course site on NYU Classes.

Weekly readings — due in advance of class on Tuesdays
Readings will be relatively short in page count. Leave yourself time to read carefully and notice thoroughly. I will hand out hard copies of readings in class; PDFs will also be available on our course site. Mark up and bring a hard copy of each reading to class.

Reading peers’ writing — due in advance of class on Thursdays
You will all be able to read all your peers’ work, and you’re encouraged to do so. You will surprise each other and learn a great deal from each other. That said, you are only required to read the pieces we will be discussing in workshop (three per week). Please print these out and read them attentively and generously. Read with a pen in hand; mark them up for the writers. Bring the hard copies to class.

Comments and critiques — due in advance of class on Thursdays
Come to workshop prepared to offer thoughtful comments on each of the three student pieces we will be discussing that week. After midterm, on weeks when you are not submitting new creative writing, you will be paired with a peer and will write short critiques of each others’ most recent work. (More on these critiques when we get there.)

Presentation
Once in the semester, each of you will give a five- to ten-minute presentation during a Tuesday class on an aspect of the readings. (More on this in class.)

Portfolio
At the end of the semester, each of you will revise and gather your best work into a small portfolio. (More on this when we get there.)
Policies

Do not be late.

Turn in your work. Do not be late.

Come to class. Do not be late. If you need to miss a class, email me as early as possible. No-email/no-show absences will drop your overall grade precipitously.

Laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic devices are not allowed in class. Plan to bring a notebook and all materials in hard copy. (Exceptions will of course be made for students with academic or medical need.)

On integrity
In this class, as across NYU, you are expected to do your own honest, original work. There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism will be reported directly to the department. University policy on academic integrity is available here: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity

Disability Disclosure Statement
Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or 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 | Fax: 212-995-4114 | Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd

Student Wellness Policy
In this class, students will be writing and sharing pieces of nonfiction, some of which may include personal information and/or personal history. Content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will prompt my attention. For any work that may be interpreted as such, please send an email putting it in context before submitting, especially for workshop. If you 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.

Office hours & availability
I’ll hold office hours Thursday mornings, 10:30am-12:00pm, at the Lillian Vernon Writers House. Additional office hours are available by appointment—don’t hesitate to ask.

I am reachable by email (hbs334@nyu.edu) and will reply within 36 hours.
Grading

You all enter with an A. My hope is that the specter of a grade can recede from the foreground of your mind, and most of all that it not keep you from taking creative or intellectual risks. Show up and do the best work you can—for yourself and for each other.

Here’s how grades break down.

60% writing, comprising:
- submissions (60%), critiques (20%), final portfolio (20%)

40% class participation, comprising:
- attendance (20%), reading & discussion (60%), presentation (20%)

Late assignments: -5% for each day late, except in cases of emergency
Extra credit: go to a reading and write a 350- to 500-word response (+5%)

Course schedule
[ subject to change ]

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<th>Overview of Writing Schedule</th>
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**Weeks 1-5**
- 4 submissions, weekly (2 prose/hybrid, 2 poetry/hybrid)
- 1 revision
  *Dates: 9/10 . 9/17 . 9/24 . 10/1 . 10/8*

**Weeks 7-12**
- 2 submissions, alternating weeks (1 prose/hybrid, 1 poetry/hybrid)
- 2 peer critiques, alternating weeks
- 1 revision
  *Dates: 10/22 . 10/29 . 11/5 . 11/12 . 11/19 . 12/1*

**Weeks 13-14**
- revising / generating / collecting for portfolio
  *Portfolio due: 12/10*
First class
Thu Sep 3
Welcome & introduction

Week 1
Tue Sep 8
Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”
Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Mother”
Brian Doyle, “Leap”
— Questionnaire due

Thu Sep 10
Annie Dillard, “Living Like Weasels”
— Writing due

Week 2
Tue Sep 15
John Jeremiah Sullivan, “Death Rattle”
Eula Biss, excerpt from On Immunity
Rigoberto González, selection from The Book of Ruin
— Student Presentation 1

Thu Sep 17
Workshop 1
— Writing due

Week 3
Tue Sep 22
Matt Rasmussen, “Reverse Suicide”
John McPhee, “The Search for Marvin Gardens”
— Student Presentation 2

Thu Sep 24
Workshop 2
— Writing due

Week 4
Tue Sep 29
James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”
Eduardo Corral, selection from Slow Lightning
— Student Presentation 3

Thu Oct 1
Workshop 3
— Writing due

Week 5
Tue Oct 6
Caitlin Doughty, “Shaving Byron”
Tony Tulathimutte, “The Feminist”
Robyn Schiff, “American Cockroach”
— Student Presentation 4
Thu Oct 8
  Workshop 4
  — Revision due

Week 6
Tue Oct 13
  Carl Phillips, “Muscularity and Eros: On Syntax”
  Ellen Bryant Voigt, “Groundhog”
  Solmaz Sharif, selection from LOOK
  — Student Presentation 5

Thu Oct 15
  Special class — sentences

Week 7
Tue Oct 20
  Gloria Andalzúa, excerpt from “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
  selections from:
    William Shakespeare
    Paul Lawrence Dunbar
    Terrance Hayes
    Tiana Clark
  — Student Presentation 6

Thu Oct 22
  Special class — guest visit
  — Group I writing due

Week 8
Tue Oct 27
  Lorrie Moore, “People Like That Are the Only People Here”
  Claudia Rankine, selection from Citizen: An American Lyric
  — Student Presentation 7

Thu Oct 29
  Workshop Group I-A
  — Group II writing due. Group I critiques due.

Week 9
Tue Nov 3
  Natasha Trethewey, selection from Native Guard
  Zadie Smith, “Dance Lessons for Writers”
  selections from:
    Cecilia Vicuña, [TBD]
    Richard Wright, 12 Million Black Voices
    James Agee & Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men
    Archibald MacLeish & Dorothea Lange, Land of the Free
  — Student Presentation 8

Thu Nov 5
  Workshop Group II-A
  — Group I writing due. Group II critiques due.
Week 10
Tue Nov 10
Ocean Vuong, selection from On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous
Yusef Komunyakaa, selection from Magic City and Dien Cai Dau
— Student Presentation 9

Thu Nov 12
Workshop Group I-B
— Group II writing due. Group I critiques due.

Week 11
Tue Nov 17
Virginia Woolf, [TBD]
Natalie Diaz, selection from When My Brother Was an Aztec
Kevin Young, selection from Book of Hours
— Student Presentation 10

Thu Nov 19
Workshop Group II-B
— Group I revision due. Group II critiques due.

Week 12
Tue Nov 24
Ilya Kaminsky, Deaf Republic
— Portfolio outline and self-assignment for completion due (Groups I & II)

[ Thu Nov 26 — NO CLASS ]

Week 13
Tue Dec 1
Richard Rodriguez, “Late Victorians”
Danez Smith, selected poems
— Student Presentation 11
— Group II revisions due

Thu Dec 3
Special class

Week 14
Tue Dec 8
Primo Levi, “Carbon”
Marie Howe, “Singularity”
Louise Erdrich, “The Stone”
— Student Presentation 12

Thu Dec 10
Final class — portfolio reading
— Portfolio due