

Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Fall 2021 | Section CRWRI-UA.815.020

Tuesday and Thursday: 9:30AM- 10:45AM

Instructor: Azia Armstead (she/her)

Email: aa7909@nyu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

“Art is that which endures.” —Gwendolyn Brooks

Course Objective: This course is designed to introduce students to the craft of writing poetry and fiction. Students will write and submit their own creative work for workshop and explore their individual creative processes throughout the semester. Our readings will mostly be contemporary pieces written by writers of color. Students are encouraged to read as writers as we will conduct close readings and class discussions in order to engage with the work and identify what the pieces are doing as well as what stylistic and compositional choices make them compelling. Students will learn terminology and techniques employed in both genres and apply them to their own creative work.

Texts: Unless otherwise stated all readings will be available in a course reader or online on NYU Classes.

Structure: The class will be equally divided into two sections. We'll begin focusing on Poetry then transition to Fiction halfway through the semester. Tuesday classes will be dedicated to craft in which we will discuss the assigned readings and do some in-class writing. Thursday's, with the exception of our first Thursday class, will be our workshop days. During our first meeting the class will be divided into three workshop groups; Group A, B and C. The workshop schedule is indicated below.

Grading:

Attendance and participation: 30%

Writing Assignments: 30%

Final Portfolio: 40%

Assignments:

Assigned Readings: In order to be prepared for class discussions assigned readings must be read prior to class. All reading assignments are detailed below and will be available to you in the course reader or online on NYU Classes.

Writing Assignments:

Workshop Pieces- Please submit your poem or fiction piece you'd like to be workshopped no later than midnight on the Sunday before your group is scheduled for workshop. Doing so will allot ample time

for your classmates and myself to engage with the work, write feedback and prepare notes/talking points for our discussion on Thursday. Poetry submissions can be any length whereas 2-5 double spaced pages are required for Fictions submissions. However, you are welcome to submit more if you like! Over the course of the semester you will submit 4 workshop pieces. I ask that you submit at least 1 piece in each genre over the course of the semester.

- Weekly reading response- Write a response to one or more of the assigned readings. Reading responses can be 1-2 double spaced pages on what you liked about the readings, any questions you have regarding what you read and/or what you've learned from the reading. You may also write a comparison in which you compare the text to something you've written or have read in or outside of class. These assignments are due at the beginning of class on Tuesday.
- In-Class Writing Exercises- Each Tuesday (Craft Class) there will be designated time for in-class writing. These exercises are solely graded on completion and will be collected at the end of the semester. They are meant to spark inspiration and may be the foundation for a piece you are working on outside of class. Keep in mind that they do not have to be perfect. Have fun with it!
- Workshop Feedback- You are required to give written feedback to your classmates when their work is being workshopped. Please bring in a copy of all pieces that are being workshopped with your written feedback each Thursday so that you can give them to the author. Written feedback should include your observations; what you admire about the piece, what you believe is working well, any questions you may have on the work and suggestions for revision. Please be kind to one another when offering written and oral feedback.

Final Portfolio;

Your final portfolio should include revised versions of the 4 workshop pieces you've written over the course of the semester. If your portfolio is mostly poetry, include at least 1 fiction piece. If your portfolio is mostly fiction, include at least 1 poem. Be sure not to resubmit the original draft. Make sure that you are considering the suggestions and critiques you've received from the class in order to write something that is different from the original.

Class Participation - This is a discussion based course, therefore your participation is vital. Your voices and input will enhance the collective class experience as well as your individual learning experience. I'm interested in hearing your thoughts! Please be respectful and mindful of your classmates during discussions!

Attendance- You are expected to come to class on time so that we can begin at 9:30am and end promptly at 10:45am. Please be mindful of your classmates and my time. If you are more than 15 minutes late it will be considered ½ an absence. If you are more than 30 minutes late you will be considered absent despite if

you come to class or not. More than 2 unexcused absences will reduce your letter grade by one degree (example: A to A-). If you are aware that you will not be able to come to class notify me via email in advance.

Electronics in the Classroom- I ask that you refrain from using electronic devices during workshop and class discussions. However, if you prefer to do in-class writing on a laptop or tablet as opposed to pen and paper that is fine with me.

Academic Integrity- This is a Creative Writing course therefore you must use your own words in order to create original work. **Do not plagiarize as it will not be tolerated by any means** Any instance of plagiarism will be reported to the department without exception.

Student Resources

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
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.

Counseling Services: 726 Broadway New York, NY 10003 (212) 998-4780
Wellness Center:
24-Hour Hotline: (212) 443-9999
Email: wellness.exchange@nyu.edu

***** Class Schedule *****

TH 9/2: First day of class: No Reading! Introductions/Ice breaker & Review Syllabus

WEEK 1

T 9/7: Poetry on the Self:

“Anodyne” by Yusef Komunyakaa, “won’t you celebrate with me” by Lucille Clifton, “Major and I” by Major Jackson, “August, 1953” by David Wojahn, “Portrait of Eve as the Anaconda” by Safiya Sinclair, and “Diving into the Wreck” by Adrienne Rich

TH 9/9: Space and Time: Poems on Temporality and Locality

“Chinatown Diptych” by Jenny Xie, “Ex(ile) by Desiree Bailey”, “At Pegasus” and “New York Poem” by Terrence Hayes, “There Are Birds Here” by Jamaal May, and “Nothing to Declare” by Lauren K. Alleyne

**In Class: Mock Workshop (Workshop Etiquette) and “What is a Poem?” Discussion

WEEK 2

T 9/14: Ars Poetica: The Art of Poetry

“Poetry is Not a Luxury” by Audre Lorde [essay], “The Triggering Town” by Richard Hugo [essay] “Why I Write Poetry” by Major Jackson, “The Poem You Asked For” by Larry Levis and “Take the I Out” by Sharon Olds, and “Ars Poetica #100: I Believe” by Elizabeth Alexander

TH 9/16: First workshop! Group A

WEEK 3

T 9/21: Poetry of Love & Praise: The Ode and Love Poems

“Homage to My Hips” by Lucille Clifton, “Ode of Girls’ Things” by Sharon Olds, “Ode to the Maggot” by Yusef Komunyakaa, “Ode to My Socks” by Pablo Neruda, “Dirty Rice” by Kelly Norman Ellis, “Iron” by Elizabeth Acevedo, “21 Love poems” by Adrienne Rich, and “This Room and Everything in It” by Li-Young Lee

TH 9/23: Workshop Group B

WEEK 4

T 9/28: Music & Dance in Poetry: Jazz, Hip-Hop and The Electric Slide

“Break” by Aracelis Girmay, “The Electric Slide is Not a Dance, Man!” by Porsha Olayiwola, “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brook, “The Weary Blues” by Langston Hughes” and “Kind of Blue” by A. Van Jordan

Spoken Word: Poetry and Performance:

Video: “Alien Suite” by Safia Elhillo, “Harlem” by Miles Hodges, “Skinhead” by Patricia Smith, “Our Vision is Our Voice” by Sonia Sanchez, “16 Bars for Kendrick Lamar” by Joshua Bennett, “Ode to Cardi B” by Crystal Valentine

TH 9/30: Workshop Group C

WEEK 5

T 10/5: Poems on the Nation: Politics & Poetry

“Facing It” by Yusef Komunyakaa, “I, Too” by Langston Hughes, “The Hill We Climb” by Amanda Gorman, “We Lived Happily During the War” Ilya Kaminsky, “America the Beautiful” and “Notes on the State of Virginia, II” by Safiya Sinclair, “Chicago’s Congo” by Frank Marshall Davis, and “Elliptical” by Harriett Mullen

TH 10/7: Workshop Group A

WEEK 6

T 10/12: FALL BREAK! NO CLASS!

TH 10/14: Workshop Group B

WEEK 7

T 10/19: Poetic Forms (Pantoum, Dictionary, Sonnet, Villanelle, Sestina, and Prose Poem):

“My Brother at 3am” by Natalie Diaz, “With” and “in • cho • ate” by A. Van Jordan , “One Art” by Elizabeth Bishop, “Fever Ghazal” by Tina Chang, “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” by Terrance Hayes, “Motown Crown” and “Ethel’s Sestina” by Patricia Smith and “Wings of Return” by Don Mee Choi

TH 10/21: Workshop Group C

WEEK 8

T 10/26:

“The Making of a Writer: From the Poets in the Kitchen” by Paule Marshall & “Ain’t That Good News” by Brit Bennett

Video: Creative Breakthroughs: An Interview with Ta-Nehisi Coates on Writing

TH 10/28: Workshop Group A

WEEK 9

T 11/2: Selected stories from “Insurrections” by Rion Amilcar Scott

TH 11/4: Workshop Group B

WEEK 10

T 11/9: Science Fiction: “Bloodchild” by Octavia Butler & “The Space Traders” by Derrick Bell

Video: “The Space Traders” - Derrick Bell (1994)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UpOJzIvmCCk>

TH 11/11: Workshop Group C

WEEK 11

T 11/16: Prologue and Chapter One [Battle Royal] from “Invisible Man” by Ralph Ellison

TH 11/18: Workshop Group A

WEEK 12

T 11/23: excerpt from “Annie John” and “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid & “The Youngest Doll” by Rosario Ferré

TH 11/25: THANKSGIVING BREAK! NO CLASS!

WEEK 13

T 11/30: “Children of the Sea” by Edwidge Danticat and “Why Parents Worry” by Cheng Naishan

TH 12/2: Workshop Group B

WEEK 14

T 12/7: “Sweat” by Zora Neale Hurston and “Everyday Use” by Alice Walker

TH 12/9: Workshop Group C

Last day of class!

T 12/14: Goodbyes & Party!!

Final Portfolio due Friday, December 17