

Introduction to Prose and Poetry: A World Tour

Section number: CRWRI-UA.815.009

Schedule: Tue / Thu: 11 AM - 12:15 PM

Instructor: Michael Barron (msb450@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: By Appointment

Now is the age of world literature, and everyone must contribute to hasten the arrival of that age. —Goethe

Course Overview

In this class, you will be taken on an international tour of literature from a creative perspective through stories, excerpts, poems, essays and other material (including music, film, and art if time allows). In the process, we will use these works to inform the development your own voice, style, and focus of writing.

Course Objectives

- To mature a knowledge of world literature from all places and ages
- To examine how experience and subject translate to style and content
- To foster a language for discussing work critically and constructively
- To strengthen an ability to make use of editorial feedback
- To build intellectual compassion and etiquette

Structure

The course is biweekly, with each day alternating between a workshop class (writing, revising) and a craft class (reading, responding).

Required Texts

Unless otherwise noted, I will email PDFs or links. An archive of all class material will be available on a Google Drive.

Workshop (Tuesdays)

Over the semester, you will have three opportunities to be workshopped:

- One submission of 3 – 5 pages of poetry (one to three poems)
- One submission of 8 – 15 pages of fiction (one to two stories)
- One submission of 8 – 15 pages of creative non-fiction (one to two essays)

All submissions must be in 12-point, double-spaced Times New Roman font.

Pieces for workshop must be emailed to everyone one week in advance (**we will create a schedule for handing things in the day of class**) For the day of the workshop, you must prepare written feedback in the form of an editor's letter (100 words or more) for each writer that provides:

- 1) An overview of the piece's mission (what's it about?).
- 2) how the piece functions (what are the elements at work?).
- 3) how it's successful in using these elements and where it could improve.

In addition to the editor's letter, you must also make five in line comments per piece on specific things you'd like to highlight and why (grammar corrections, while welcome, do not count as editorial comments). You will learn methods to be constructive in your criticism, but above all you cannot pass judgement without reason. Back up your claims and above all be encouraging **to all of your classmates**. If you are able, I strongly suggest bringing printed copies to class for your own reference. Please email your responses to each writer on the evening *prior* to workshop by 7pm and cc me.

Craft (Thursdays)

In each class we will go over four writers from a certain world region. We shall discuss the themes and style of each work, as well as a brief summary of the historical-socio experiences that inform them. In order to foster productive in-class discussions, on the evening prior to each class (**at 7pm, please**), you will need to email me reader's responses (100 words per author), in which you offer critiques highlighting themes and stylistic elements and how they serve each piece. You can be positive or negative in your words, but again, you cannot pass judgment without reason.

Final Portfolio

At the end of semester, in addition to the work you've handed in over the course of the semester, you will be submitting revisions to your workshopped pieces. You will also be required to submit a 200-word introduction to each piece that examines how this revision based on the insights gained in class discussions and submitted feedback.

Policies

Grading

Attendance and participation 40%
Weekly responses 30%
Final portfolio 30%

Attendance and lateness

This is a class founded on discussion. We examine work as a group and to be a part of that group requires your presence, attention, and input. To be part of that group requires being on time. More than two instances of lateness will count as an unexcused absence and more than two unexcused absences will result in a reduction in your grade.

Plagiarism

The school has strict policies against plagiarism. if you are caught plagiarizing, the consequences are drastic and could result, in the school's words "in failure on a particular assignment, failure in a course, suspension or expulsion from the University, or other penalties. Writers block happens, but there are ways to solve it without stealing someone else's work and calling it your own.

Electronics in class

Before COVID, having electronic devices in classes was strongly discouraged. That said, using devices remains a privilege and not a right. If I perceive that use of an electronic device is interfering with your ability to fully engage with class discussions, you may lose this right and be required to use pen and paper for the rest of the semester.

NYU's 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

Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

NYU's 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.

PART TWO – THE COURSE

Week One – Introduction and Tips

(Thu, Sept 2)

Start Lydia Davis's "Thirty Recommendations for Good Writing Habits."

Homework

Make 5 written observations where you would otherwise photograph them.

Week Two – South America

(Tue, Sept 7)

Workshop Group A

(Thu, Sept 9)

Jorge Luis Borges, "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis, Tertius"; Clarice Lispector, "The Triumph"; Alejandra Pizarnik, "A Sign Upon the Shadow"; Roberto Bolaño, "Three Self-Portraits"

Homework

Write a narrative self-portrait using characteristics, beliefs, and experiences.

Week Three – North America

(Tue, Sept 14)

Workshop Group B

(Thu, Sept 16)

Octavio Paz, "Return"; Toni Morrison, "Recitatif"; DeLillo, "Elegy for Left-Hand Alone"; Carson, "Glass Essay"

Homework

Create a tangential narrative that gets distracted as it progresses.

Week Four – The Caribbean

(Tue, Sept 21)

Workshop Homework – Group C

(Thu, Sept 23)

Walcott, "Omeros, Book I"; Brathwaite, "Kumina"; Douglas, "Version" Arenas "The Glass Tower"

Homework

Using a personal experience, write a myth in which you are a character

Week Five – Irish and British Literature

(Tue, Sept 28)

Workshop Homework – Group A

(Thu, Sept 30)

Louis-Bennett, "Pond"; Rooney, "Color and Light"; Batchelor, "A Form of Words"; Oswald "Dunt"

Homework

Find a couple on the street that asks who are they, where they are going, in what state is their relationship.

Week Six – Western European Literature

(Tue, Oct 5)

Workshop Group B

(Thu, Oct 7)

Sebald, "Dr Henry Selwyn"; Ernaux, "The Years"; Rosseli, "Hospital Poems"; Pessoa "Book of Disquiet"

Homework

NO HOMEWORK

Week Seven – Scandinavian Literature

(Tue, Oct 12)

NO CLASS

(Thu, Oct 14)

Jansson, "The Cartoonist"; Knaussgard, "At the Bottom of the Universe"; Jaderlund, "In a Cylinder in the Water of Waterweep"; Christensen, "It"

Homework

Write a diaristic account of a day in your life with at least seven entries.

Week Eight – Russian and Soviet Literature

(Tue, Oct 19)

Workshop Homework – Group A

(Thu, Oct 21)

Tolstoya, "White Walls"; Pushkin, "Mozart and Salieri"; Alexievich, "Snatches of Street Noise and Kitchen Conversation"; Mandelstam, "The Voronezh Notebooks"

Homework

Write about a moment or experience that was politically awakening for you, but do so in a way where you are a character among many.

Week Nine –Eastern European and Turkish Literature

(Tue, Oct 26)

Workshop Homework – Group B

(Thu, Oct 28)

Krasznahorkai, "Wandering-Standing"; Sappho, "Fragments"; Celan "Death Fugue"; Pamuk, "My Father's Suitcase"

Homework

Narrate a memory in fragments or in run-on sentences

Week Ten – North Africa, Palestine, Israel

(Tue, Nov 2)

Workshop Homework – Group C

(Thu, Nov 4)

Bouanani, "The Illiterate Man"; Daoud, "Musa"; Shibli, "Minor Detail" Shabtai "Hope"

Homework

Build a pandemic panorama of your neighborhood. What was it before, what has changed.

Week Eleven - Central and Southern Africa

(Tue, Nov 9)

Workshop Homework – Group A

(Thu, Nov 11)

Cole, "Everyday Is for the Thief"; Serpell, "1964"; Soyinka, "Telephone Conversation"; Kebede "Tales of Silence"

Homework

Take a minor character from something we've read and try to write from their perspective.

Week Twelve – Arabian Peninsula and Central Asia

(Tue, Nov 16)

Workshop Homework – Group B

(Thu, Nov 18)

Mikhail, “The Iraqi Nights” Farrokhzad, “Wind-Up Doll” Alomar, “The Youth Thieves” Mohammadi “Dasht-e Leili Massacre”

Homework

Find a newspaper article from any region other than the U.S. and try to narrate it from the perspective of someone involved.

Week Thirteen – Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia

(Tue, Nov 23)

Workshop Homework – Group C

(Thu, Nov 25)

NO CLASS, but read: Roy, “Paradise, Pickles, and Preserves”; Tagore, “O You Mad, You Superbly Drunk”; Pimwana, “Arid Dreams”; Malna “Third-Person DNA

Homework

Create your own controversial holiday. What does it celebrate / recognize, and what are its characteristics. Who opposes it and why?

Week Fourteen – Australia and Oceania

(Tue, Nov 30)

Workshop Homework – Group A + Discuss Final Project / Portfolio

(Thu, Dec 2)

Murnane, “Precious Bane,” Wright, “Carpentaria” Holland-Batt, “The Gift”; Frame “Gorse Is Not People”

Homework

Imagine a people, their culture and customs, who they are, how they live, and how they survive.

Week Fifteen – East Asia

(Tue, Dec 7)

Workshop Homework – Group B and C

(Thu, Dec 9)

Liu Xiaobo “June Fourth Elegies”, Bandi “City of Specters”, Yi-deum “Seoul Performance”; Tsushima “Kid Sister”

Homework

Keep working on portfolios

Week Sixteen

(Tue, Dec 14)

Hand in portfolios and join for pizza party. You must hand in portfolio to join!