

INTRODUCTION TO FICTION AND POETRY

Fall 2021 CRWRI-UA.815.003

Monday/Wednesday 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

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Office hours by appointment

“I never tried to be anything but a dreamer. I never paid any attention to people who told me to go out and live. I belonged always to whatever was far from me and to whatever I could never be. Anything that was not mine, however base, always seemed to be full of poetry.”

-Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course explores fiction and poetry writing through weekly craft discussions and student workshops. In order to cultivate the skills necessary to navigate and execute these amorphous crafts, we will foster an open and communicative environment in which the creative sensibility can be expanded and re-examined. The readings (while mostly contemporary) will range greatly in subject matter, structure, and style. As we investigate and deconstruct the literary structures at play in these published works, I encourage students to let the readings inspire experimentation in the writing they submit for workshop. The goal of the course’s hybridity is to create a space in which the craft of writing is always being developed and imbued with a sense of curiosity and care.

CLASS STRUCTURE

Mondays will be our crafts days, Wednesdays will be our workshop days. I find that workshops flow most easily when a submission schedule is solidified as early as possible, so we will try our best to iron one out the first time we convene. The first half of the semester will be dedicated to poetry readings and workshops, and the latter half will be dedicated to fiction. Despite the separation of the two units, we will often be discussing their overlap and how our development in one enhances our development in the other. We will begin Monday’s craft classes with a discussion about the assigned reading, and I will also be introducing in-class media (interviews, writing excerpts, film clips, etc.) to layer into our discussions. Wednesdays we will focus on the two scheduled workshops for that week, and I will guide us through workshopping sessions intended to be as supportive and constructive to the submitters as possible.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- Come to class on Mondays having read the assigned reading and be prepared to discuss it. Annotating/bookmarking pages as you read is always helpful.

- By Monday's class you should also email me a one page writing exercise inspired by the reading. This can take any form (poetry or prose) and is meant to foster experimentation and allow me to see a range of work outside of formal workshop submissions.
- Those submitting for their scheduled workshop should email their submission to the class by the Sunday prior to their workshop, and include a brief introduction to their poems/stories. Poetry submission should be between 2-5 pages (12-pt font, spacing varies) and fiction should be between 5-15 pages (double spaced, 12-pt font).
- Students should email their personal edits on submissions to the writers by wednesday before class and CC me on the email.
- On the last day of class, students will submit a final portfolio of their revised submissions and any revised/expanded reading responses they want to include.

GRADING

20% Attendance

15% Participation

15% Reading Responses

30% Workshop (submissions & editor's letters)

20% Final Portfolio

ATTENDANCE

This class is rooted in discourse and collaboration, and therefore is dependent on students being physically and mentally present. I understand that as college students, you are overwhelmed with commitments and extenuating circumstances arise. The best thing to do when this happens is to communicate with me as early as possible, ESPECIALLY if you are to be absent on a day you are scheduled to workshop. More than two absences will result in a 10% reduction of your final grade. Two or more instances of lateness that exceeds 20 minutes will count as an additional absence. Do not hesitate to communicate with me about anything that is affecting your ability to attend class.

LATE WORK

If you feel you are not going to make a deadline, please let me know as early as possible. Again, this becomes particularly crucial with workshop submissions. When it comes to reading responses and editor's notes, I will always try to be accommodating if you communicate with me.

PARTICIPATION

I understand that participating in class discussions comes more naturally to some than others, which is why I will try and structure discussion and workshops in a way that facilitates participation on the entire class's part. That being said, because this is a discourse-heavy class, it

is important you make an effort to engage in class discussions so I know you've prepared for class and engaged with the material.

OFFICE HOURS

My weekly schedule outside of class does vary, so I will be conducting office hours on an appointment basis. Whenever you would like to speak, just reach out and we can set up a call/facetime/in-person meeting. I'd also like to check in with students once or twice a semester in order to gauge what they are getting out of the class and what I could improve on as a teacher.

NOTES ON WORKSHOPPING

- Workshopping should be a positive experience for all those involved, especially the student who is workshopping. Submitting one's writing is not easy, and even well-intentioned critiques can be overwhelming when coming from a group of your peers.
- To minimize bombardment and maximize constructive conversation, it is important to always keep your comments focused on how to improve the material that is actually on the page. Try to avoid veering into how *you* would have written another writer's piece/how *you* would have done something differently.
- In the workshop our goal is to figure out how to make the submitted material as strong as possible, while respecting the original intention and integrity of the work. The possibilities for a piece in a workshop are endless, and ideas should be exchanged with respect and the understanding that we are ALL writers fielding a process that can be as frustrating as it is beautiful.
- If you are submitting a piece for workshop that contains content you feel could be triggering to an audience, do give a heads up in your introductory email.

PLAGIARISM

I am required to report ANY instance of plagiarism. According to NYU's Academic Integrity Guide:

“Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another writer. Because plagiarism corrupts values to which the university community is fundamentally committed—among them the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual honesty—plagiarism is considered a grave violation of academic integrity and the sanctions against it are correspondingly severe. Plagiarism can be characterized as ‘academic theft’”

Read more:

<https://liberalstudies.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/liberalstudies/academics/academic-integrity-guide.html>

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.

STUDENT WELLNESS POLICY

The mental health and wellbeing of my students is of the utmost importance. Having to field the current state of the world while also investing in your academic careers is no easy feat. Do not hesitate to reach out to me if you are feeling as though you need some additional support, and I can direct you to the NYU Wellness Center where you can find services that may be beneficial to you.

SYLLABUS

Note: My goal is to distribute PDF copies of all reading selections other than those marked with an asterisk * The texts marked with an asterisk should be purchased or borrowed from the library prior to their respective reading assignment due dates.

Week 1:

Monday 9/6: No Class

Wednesday 9/8: Introduction, Syllabus Review, Workshop Scheduling.

(Two students who are willing to workshop first and perhaps have prior experience with poetry writing are encouraged to volunteer for the 9/15 workshop!)

Week 2:

Monday 9/13: Investigative discussion regarding what we know poetry to be and the spectrum of what it can be/ some in-class poetry reading

Wednesday 9/15: Poetry Workshop 1&2

Week 3:

Monday 9/20: Discussion on selection from Caludia Rankine's *Citizen* and Morgan Parker's *There are More Beautiful Things Than Beyonce*

Wednesday 9/22: Poetry Workshop 3&4

Week 4:

Monday 9/27: Discussion on selection from Ted Hughes' *Birthday Letters* and Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*

Wednesday 9/29: Poetry Workshop 5&6

Week 5:

Monday 10/4: Discussion on selections from Alejandra Pizarnik's *Extracting the Stone of Madness* and Ross Gay's *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*

Wednesday 10/6: Poetry Workshop 7&8

Week 6:

Monday's class will be held on tuesday due to "Legislative Day"

****Tuesday 10/12:** Discussion on Rilke poem selection and Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*

Wednesday 10/13: Poetry Workshop 9&10

Week 7:

Monday 10/18: Discussion on Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*

Wednesday 10/20: Poetry Workshop 11&12

Week 8:

Monday 10/25: Discussion on James Baldwin's *Sonny's Blues* and his speech on the "Artist's Struggle for Integrity"

Wednesday 10/27: Fiction Workshop 1&2

Week 9:

Monday 11/1: Discussion on David Foster Wallace's "Incarnations of Burned Children", Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl", James Salter's "Last Night", and Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have you Been?"

Wednesday 11/3: Fiction Workshop 3&4

Week 10:

Monday 11/8: Discussion on Samantha Schweblin's *Fever Dream* *

Wednesday 11/10: Fiction Workshop 5&6

Week 11:

Monday 11/15: Discussion on Toni Morrison's *Sula* *

Wednesday 11/17: Fiction Workshop 7&8

Week 12:

Monday 11/22: Discussion on Tayeb Salih's *Season on Migration to the North* *

Wednesday 11/24: Fiction Workshop 9&10

Week 13:

Monday 11/29: Discussion on Patrick Modiano's "Afterimage" in *Suspended Sentences* *

Wednesday 12/1: Fiction Workshop 11&12

Week 14:

Monday 12/6: Discussions on selection from Fernando Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet* *

Wednesday 12/8: Last Class Celebration! Submit Portfolios by midnight.