

Writing Love and its Complexities (Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry and Prose)

Instructor: Farah Barqawi (She/her)
Contact: fo2034@nyu.edu
Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.022
Semester: Fall 2022
Class Times: Mon/Wed 8am-9:15am
Location: GCASL Room TBA
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Overview:

This creative writing course is a field of exploration and experimentation. We will read different poetry and prose, we will write original pieces, and we will workshop and revise our work and the work of our colleagues with care and attention.

The theme I chose for this class “Writing Love and its Complexities” will hopefully guide us through our readings and writings together, considering love in its different forms as an act of curiosity, exploration, understanding, communication, and survival, be it the love of writing or the love in our different relationships, the love of places or things of physical and non-physical nature, the love of non-human beings, and of course love in times of loss and crises.

Since writing is a fundamentally solitary act, our class will try to make at least some parts of our creative processes less self-absorbed. Therefore, our main interest here is to create a community that supports and excels in the desire to share and learn in this process. We are going share not only what we have written, but also our favorite authors, the most memorable excerpts or quotes for us, the poems we know by heart. Hopefully, we’ll understand why these texts make such an impression on us, we’ll discover some new ones, and, in the meantime, we’ll start to open to the long process of discovering our own literary voice.

Specific Objectives

- To identify formal qualities in works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction.
- To analyze how those formal choices serve or undermine the work.
- To discover and develop our own writing while learning from different styles we read.
- To provide rigorous and compassionate feedback.

Structure: For the most part, Mondays will be craft class, and Wednesdays will be a workshop.

Craft Class: We will start most of craft classes with a 5 min presentation by one of the students of a poem, opening paragraph or excerpt of a book you choose to recite in class. Sometimes we will have an in-class writing exercise, and we will then discuss the readings due that day. Our discussion will focus on writers’ literary techniques. How do these writers do what they do? How do they use structure to portray themes and emotions? What rules do they follow or break? How can we use their techniques in our own writing?

Workshop: On the class period before your workshop, you must bring in **13 printed copies** of your piece, to be workshopped during the following class. You will be workshopped a total of two times this semester, in a total of two genres. You must choose a different genre for each workshop. In other words, if your first workshop submission is in fiction, your second workshop submission must be in either poetry or non-fiction.

We will discuss workshop etiquette more specifically in class. If you have any concerns, anxieties, or questions, please feel free to reach out to me. When workshop works, it is a magical thing. More on workshop at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and Class Participation: 20% Your presence —both physical and mental— in our class is essential. As a small group of writers, the trust and rapport we build as a community is integral to everyone’s growth and progress. This is a discussion-based class. Come prompt and prepared. On workshop days, you are expected to offer thoughtful comments on each of the student pieces we will be discussing that week. More than one unexcused absence will result in a reduction of your grade. More than three instances of lateness (10 min) will count as an unexcused absence. If you are 20 minutes late to class, it counts as an absence.

Workshop Critiques: 15% For each workshop, you will mark up your classmates’ submissions. Underline, star, highlight. Write a note when something worked for you, and why it did. Likewise, note when something confused you or detracted from the piece. You will also write a critique of each submission (at least 2 paragraphs). You will consider, how does this writer use literary techniques and structure to convey meaning? What is successful? What is less successful? Please email me before class with 1 copy of your written critique and arrive with 1 copy for the writer plus the annotated copy of their text.

Writing Submissions: 20% On the Monday class before your workshop day, you will bring in 13 copies of your workshop submission, for your classmates and me. Workshop is the crux of the class, so I hope you take these seriously while using them as a time to learn and practice new literary techniques!

Readings Responses: 15%. Every non-workshop day, you will write a 1-2 paragraph journal response to the readings. Please email me these responses max by 7 pm on the night before the class. In this response, I expect you to engage honestly with the readings. What is your opinion? What elements and literary techniques of the work moved or delighted you, and do you know why? If you hated something — tell me, and tell me why. Most readings will be available in a packet on our course site unless noted otherwise. I strongly encourage you to read them in hard copy with a pen in hand. Jot down what you notice. Bring a hard copy of each reading, along with your notes, to class.

Final Portfolio 30%: Your final portfolio will consist of all the material you’ve written over the semester. This includes:

1. **All** writing assignments we did in class;
2. Your **two originally submitted pieces;**

3. A revised version of each piece. The revised versions will take into account my comments and the comments of your peers.
4. A **third submission**. The third piece can be in any genre (poetry, fiction, or non-fiction). It may build on an in-class writing exercise or be something entirely new.
5. **All** critique letters you received from your colleagues;
6. The opening paragraph, quote or excerpt of a book/essay, or the poem you choose to recite in class and a short text (up to 2 pages) explaining why you chose that text.

Your final portfolio must be bound together in some way: binder, folder, paper clips, shoelace, what have you.

Office Hours: I would like each person to meet with me during office hours at least once during the semester. Send me an email at fo2034@nyu.edu to secure an appointment time.

Electronics in class: Electronics are not allowed in class. Please keep phones, tablets, laptops, *etc.* away during class. In the rare case that electronics may be used for an in-class exercise, I will let you know.

On integrity and plagiarism: 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, 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>

Student Wellness Policy

For workshop pieces, unless we see explicit evidence that the narrator of a work is the writer themselves, we will assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, that seems to be a possible cry for help, will likely prompt my attention. Please send me an email putting such work in context before submitting.

If you ever need someone to talk to at any point, please feel comfortable reaching out to me. I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center and/or other resources.

NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline: 212 443-9999.

COURSE MATERIALS

Most of the material will be in your course reading packet uploaded on Brightspace, these texts include but not limited to:

Non-fiction

Why I write, George Orwell

Why I write, Joan Didion

Poetry is Not a Luxury, Audre Lorde

Moments of Being, Virginia Woolf

Notes for Young Writers, Annie Dillard

Shitty First Drafts, Ann Lamott

How to Write Iranian-America, or The Last Essay, Porochista Khakpour

Selected excerpts from *Heavy*, Kiese Laymon

Selected excerpts from *Bluets*, Maggie Nelson

Selected excerpts from *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, Ocean Vuong

Selected excerpts from *Room 304 Or How I Hid from My Dear Father for 35 Years*, Amr Ezzat

Selected excerpts from *Fierce Attachments*, Vivian Gornick

The Love Of My Life, Cheryl Strayed

Things I Didn't Know, Wiam El-Tamami

Short Fiction

Girl, Jamaica Kincaid

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, Raymond Carver

Two O'clock on a Tuesday, Muhammed El-Hajj (or *Nobody Mourns the City's Cats*)

The Cheater's Guide to Love, Junot Diaz

The Rememberer, Aimee Bender

Lust, Susan Minot

A Temporary Matter, Jhumpa Lahiri

Living Like Weasels, Annie Dillard

Five Stories, Lydia Davis

Oats, Rashad Hosein

In the Wrong Place, Haytham el-Wardany

You Can Call Me Velvet, Rasha Abbas

Poetry

Wild Geese, Mary Oliver

One Art, Elizabeth Bishop

The Blue Terrance, Terrance Hayes

TBA, Mahmoud Darwish

TBA, Ann Carson

Anodyne, Yusef Komunyakaa

Bad Temple, Sara Farag Elkamel

Love, Tina Chang

Forsythia, Ada Limon

The Garden, Aria Aber

The Clot, Iman Mirsal
Love Poem with Forgetting, Dana Alsamsam
Maternity, Anna Swir

Note on content:

Please note that some readings could be subject to change/replacement according to class development, and a more detailed reading assignment over the weeks will be provided later.

COURSE PLAN

Week 1

Monday, September 5th

Labor day. No classes!

Wednesday, September 7th

Welcome!

Introductions, syllabus review, workshop schedule, in-class writing exercise

Week 2

Monday, September 12th

Why Do We Write? On Love and Motives...
+ in-class writing exercise

Wednesday, September 14th

What Do We Write? On Different Crafts
Writing Assignment (for all)

Week 3

Monday, September 19th

Romance... oh Romance!
Writing Assignment due

Wednesday, September 21st

Sample Workshop (3 groups)

Week 4

Monday, September 26th

Dear Mother, Dear Father (1)
Group 1 workshop submission due

Wednesday, September 28th

Group 1 Workshop

Week 5

Monday, October 3rd

Dear Mother, Dear Father (2)
Group 2 workshop submission due

Wednesday, October 5th

Group 2 Workshop

Week 6

Monday, October 10th

No Classes across NYU
Group 3 workshop submission due (8 am)

Tuesday, October 11th
*Classes meet according
to Monday schedule*

On Friendship

Wednesday, October 12th

Group 3 workshop

Week 7

Monday, October 17th

Non-human Love
Group 4 workshop submission due

Wednesday, October 19th

Group 4 workshop

Week 8

Monday, October 24th

Writing Loss and Grief
Group 1 workshop submission due

Wednesday, October 26th

Group 1 workshop

Week 9

Monday, October 31st

Love in Old and New Places
Group 2 workshop submission due

Wednesday, November 2nd

Group 2 workshop

Week 10

Monday, November 7th

Love in Times of Crisis
Group 3 workshop submission due

Wednesday, November 9th

Group 3 workshop

Week 11

Monday, November 14th

Love as Resistance

Group 4 workshop submission due

Wednesday, November 16th

Group 4 workshop

Week 12

Monday, November 21th

Love as an Obsession

Group 1 & 2 revision due

Wednesday, November 23th

FALL BREAK!

Week 13

Monday, November 28th

Self-love

Group 3 & 4 revision due

Wednesday, November 30th

Group 1 & 2 revision workshop

Week 14

Monday, December 5th

Love in Simple Daily Details

Wednesday, December 7th

Group 3 & 4 revision workshop

Week 15

Monday, December 12th

Special Class

Wednesday, December 14th

Last Class!

Portfolio due

Workshop

1. Class Submissions:

There will be 4 groups of students, 3 persons each, rotating over the weeks

- If you are being workshopped, you will bring in **13 copies** of your submission on the class period before.
- You must choose a different genre for each workshop. In other words, if your first workshop submission is fiction, your second workshop submission must be either poetry or nonfiction.
- Prose submissions (fiction or non-fiction) must be 5-8 pages long, double spaced.
- Poetry submissions must be 2-6 pages long, double spaced. Poetry submissions can include one or two poems.

2. Critiques

For each workshop, you will mark up your classmates' submissions. You will also write a critique of each submission (at least 2 paragraphs). You will consider, how does this writer use literary techniques and structure to convey meaning? What is successful? What is less successful? **Please 1. email me one copy of your critique before class and 2. arrive to class with one copy of your critique, for the writer.**

- When writing critiques, remember we are ALL here to learn
- Include comments on what was effective and what was less effective, citing specific quotes, page numbers, *etc.* when possible.
- There is a way to provide constructive criticism while remaining kind and respectful. Use language such as “the writer did X, which was/was not effective because Y” rather than “I liked X” or “I didn’t like X”