

Introduction to Creative Writing — Poetry & Prose — CRWRI-UA 815 016

Instructor: Nina Ferraz (she/her/hers)
Time: Tues/Thurs 9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m.
Location: Bldg:BOBS Room:837 Loc: Washington Square

gf2232@nyu.edu & (914) 608-9322
(from September 1st to December 14th)
Office Hours: by appointment

SYLLABUS

In this introductory course you will learn, hands on, some fundamentals of craft in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction (CNF). Our main goal is twofold: review and understand these concepts, their importance and limitations, and practice handling them as tools to make us better readers and more skillful writers.

I will work hard so our class can become an inspiring, creative, open, communicative, kind, warm, relaxed, fear-free and shame-free environment, because I believe that this is the best way to nurture hardwork and intellectual rigor, as well as innovation and creativity.

1. Course Description

1.A. CRAFT CLASSES

On **Tuesdays**, we will discuss craft elements. Through observation (reading and analyzing), we will study how these elements are treated in celebrated texts (see class schedule for details) - a tailored selection of works of renowned authors. Total of 12 classes (Poetry = 6 classes; Prose = 6 classes, 4 Fiction and 2 CNF)

Poetry

CLASS STRUCTURE: Professor Matthew Rohrer has a very helpful rubric for how to approach a poem. We will use this rubric and work with concepts such as sound, image, voice, structure, performance, intelligent ideas, and the negation of meaning to analyze a careful selection of poems by major authors from all time and also from oral tradition (see list per class)

IN-CLASS WRITING: we will try to allot 10 to 15 minutes of planned and prompted in-class writing. (time permitting)

This is an effective way to enhance class productivity. It helps students ignite their creative process, and breaks the cycle of procrastination. We hope this activity will help you to connect with your creative ideas, get focused and energized, but we won't be grading these texts. Important: To avoid distractions, no electronic devices are permitted during the writing time, just pen and paper. We will reevaluate our practices throughout the course and see what is working or not for our specific group.

HOMEWORK: prior to each class, read 5 poems (see class schedule for more details) and write a response to what you have read (length: from a paragraph to 1 page, Times New Roman (TNR), front 12, space 1.5) and/or choose 5 sentences from the readings (that you like or dislike) and explain why.

Videos and Songs (links will be provided)

Fiction

CLASS STRUCTURE: We will handle concepts such as form, structure, character, voice, point of view, setting, plot, scene, exposition, conflict, climax, resolution, and hero's journey to analyze the selected short stories (see list per class).

IN-CLASS WRITING: we will try to allot some time for in-class writing (time permitting)

HOMEWORK: prior to each class, read 2 to 3 short stories / fairy tales (see class schedule for more details) and write a response to what you have read (length: from a paragraph to 1 page, TNR, 12, space 1.5) and/or choose 5 sentences from the readings (that you like or dislike) and explain why.

Creative Nonfiction (CNF)

CNF is a melting pot, a necessary struggle to apprehend (and to a certain extent homogenize) a diverse constellation of texts which includes personal essays, lyric essays, biography, autobiography, memoir, book reviews, portraits, vignettes, literary journalism, humor, travel, nature, environmental writing, and others. We will understand these concepts and categories, their importance and limitations, and practice handling them as tools so we can more easily understand what we are reading and writing.

CLASS STRUCTURE: We will analyze a selection of exemplary and celebrated creative nonfiction works with an eye for form, for how these texts were built and the choices the authors made to create their work. How do writers treat truth, facts, subjectivity and voice?

IN-CLASS WRITING: we will try to allot some time for in-class writing (time permitting)

HOMEWORK: prior to each class, read 2 to 4 selected excerpts of the listed works (see class schedule for more details) and write a response to what you have read (length: from a paragraph to 1 page, TNR, 12, space 1.5) and/or choose 5 sentences from the readings (that you like or dislike) and explain why.

1.B. WORKSHOP CLASSES

On **Thursdays**, we will discuss and give feedback on each other's work. Each student will be able to submit their writings 3 times. Our main goal is to be creative and free, but also try to raise awareness of how the concepts discussed in our craft lessons can inform our own work. We want you to write, by the end of this course, at least one text of poetry and 2 of prose (fiction and CNF), because we want our class to explore learning and writing as it should be: an adventure, a stroll out of our comfort zone. But, along with that, you can also focus on your genre of preference. Total of 12 classes (Poetry 6, Prose 6)

SUBMITTING YOUR PIECE

Each student will be able to submit 3 times.

Submit up to 5 poems or 3 to 4 pages of prose (TNR, 12, 1,5 space) - Do not feel any pressure to write to the word limit, short work can be just as powerful. You will be asked to try for at least 1 piece of poetry, 1 of fiction and 1 of creative nonfiction.

Remember: write, revise, cut, cut, cut.

GIVING WRITTEN FEEDBACK

For workshop days, bring a marked-up printed copy of classmates' pieces, and/or a feedback letter.

Remember: Identify the author's intent

Narrators vs Characters vs Classmates - don't confuse them

MARKED-UP COPY: Your line-in comments may include notes on grammar/spelling, facts or logistical aspects that need to be clarified, questions about characters, setting or plot, suggestions of cuts, additions or re-arranging of text.

Your FEEDBACK LETTER (single page, TNR, 12, space 1.5) or your marked-up copy, must include your biggest overall questions, and suggestions for how to resolve at least one of the questions you brought up.

If you want, I can provide a feedback letter template.

DISCUSSION - come to class prepared for a vivid, respectful and positive discussion on how to help the authors in their intentions for the text.

2. SCHEDULE - Date / Class # / Topic / Reading List

TUESDAY - 09/06 - Class 1, INTRO 1

- Introductions
- Syllabus
- Expectations and students info
- Building a group
- Let's play with ideas, a game - an active, participative, funny, icebreaker game that will help us 1) review concepts in literature (theory and craft), 2) organize/catalog ideas, 3) generate questions 4) put us at ease with the jargon, 5) assess, as a group, our main interests and areas for improvement.

SPECIAL HOMEWORK: from what we have discussed during the game, each student (or group of students) prepare a brief text (1 page, TNR, 12, space 1.5) on a subject (of choice) to be read and discussed next class

THURSDAY - 09/08 - Class 2, INTRO 2

- Discussion / student presentations

TUESDAY - 09/13 - Class 3, CRAFT 1, Poetry 1

- How to approach a poem? - basics

William Shakespeare, Luís Vaz de Camões, Charles Bukowski, Guillaume Apollinaire, Augusto de Campos

(for the first day, we will read: Sonnet 12, The Lusiads - Canto X , Bluebird, Calligrammes , Luxo)

Videos: Marina Abramovic And Ulay Live at Moma (3:38 minutes) and 7 Little Limericks (1:58 minute)

THURSDAY - 09/15 - Class 4, WORKSHOP 1, Poetry 1 Group A

TUESDAY - 09/20 - Class 5, CRAFT 2, Poetry 2

- Sound, Image, Voice, Structure

W.B. Yeats (probably Leda and the Swan), Rimbaud (probably Venus Anadiomene), Woodsworth, Lord Byron, Bob Dylan, Caetano Veloso

THURSDAY - 09/22 - Class 6, WORKSHOP 2, Poetry 2 Group B

TUESDAY - 09/27 - Class 7, CRAFT 3, Poetry 3

- Poetry and Translation

Vinicius de Moraes, Augusto dos Anjos, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Florbela Espanca, Fernando Pessoa

THURSDAY - 09/29 - Class 8, WORKSHOP 3, Poetry 3 Group C

TUESDAY - 10/4 - Class 9, CRAFT 4, Poetry 4

- Today: Ocean Vuong, Sharon Olds, Claudia Rankine, Terrance Hayes

THURSDAY - 10/06 - Class 10, WORKSHOP 4, Poetry 4 Group D

TUESDAY - 10/11 - no class (Fall Break / Legislative Monday)

THURSDAY - 10/13 - Class 11, WORKSHOP 5, Poetry 5 Group A

TUESDAY - 10/18 - Class 12, CRAFT 5, Poetry 5

- Yesterday: Sapho, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Petrarch, Matsuo Basho

THURSDAY - 10/20 - Class 13, WORKSHOP 6, Poetry 6 Group B

TUESDAY - 10/25 - Class 14, CRAFT 6, Poetry 6

- Performance / voice vs writing / rhythm and intonation / aesthetic quality of voice
Listen to selected songs by Bob Dylan, Caetano Veloso (It 's A Long Way, London London), Fagner (Fanaticism by Florbela Espanca), Paulo Diniz (E agora, José? by Carlos Drummond de Andrade), Marisa Monte e Arnaldo Antunes- Amor I love you (excerpt of Primo Basilio by Eça de Queiroz)

- Pause to think - review, reassess, more poems

THURSDAY - 10/27 - Class 15, WORKSHOP 7, Prose 1 Group C

TUESDAY - 11/01 - Class 16, CRAFT 7, Prose 1

Narrator, voice, tone, reliability

1. The Stowaway by Julian Barnes
2. Midnight Mass by Machado de Assis
3. Bigwig by Machado de Assis

THURSDAY - 11/3 - Class 17, WORKSHOP 8, Prose 2 Group D

TUESDAY - 11/08 - Class 18, CRAFT 8, Prose 2

Objects, events and symbols in short stories - Is everything there for a reason?

1. In the Ice Region by Joyce Carol Oates
2. Emma Zenns by Jorge Luis Borges
3. The Body by Clarice Lispector

THURSDAY - 11/10 - Class 19, WORKSHOP 9, Prose 3 Group A

TUESDAY - 11/15 - Class 20, CRAFT 9, Prose 3

Endings - Winning by a Knockout

1. The Animals by Michel Laub
2. Rothschild's Fiddle by Anton Chekhov
3. Night Drive by Rubem Fonseca

THURSDAY - 11/17 - Class 21, WORKSHOP 10, Prose 4 Group B

TUESDAY - 11/22 - Class 22, CRAFT 10, Prose 4

Other stories

1. The Widow of Ephesus by Petronio
2. Grimm's fairy tales - The Three Spinners and The Wolf and The 7 Little Kids
3. One of the fairy tales of A True Blue Idea by Marina Colasanti (probably A Moça Tecelã)

THURSDAY - 11/24 - No class (Thanksgiving break - November 23, 24, 25)

TUESDAY - 11/29 - Class 23, CRAFT 11, Prose 5

Portrait, Vignette, Chronicle, Essay and Book Review

1. Theophrastus' Characters: an ancient take on bad behavior
2. Selected Crônicas, by Clarice Lispector (New Directions)
3. Changing My Mind, by Zadie Smith
4. Book Review from the New Yorker Recommends

THURSDAY - 12/01 Class 24, WORKSHOP 11, Prose 5 Group C

TUESDAY - 12/06 - Class 25, CRAFT 12, Prose 6

Biography, Autobiography, Memoir (and autofiction). Excerpts from:

1. A Beautiful Mind: The Life of Mathematical Genius and Nobel Laureate John Nash by Sylvia Nasar
2. Educated a memoir by Tara Westover
3. In cold blood by Truman Capote (autofiction - as a comparison to autobiography and memoir)

THURSDAY - 12/08 Class 26, WORKSHOP 12, Prose 6 Group D

TUESDAY - 12/13 - Class 27 LAST CLASS

- Reading / celebration

3. GRADING

- Attendance & Participation — 40 points

This class is discussion-based and so attendance is very important, especially on workshop days. Students should arrive on time, and be ready for discussion. All students are allowed one unexcused absence, but all absences beyond that will drop your letter grade by a third. If you are more than 15 minutes late, that will count as an unexcused absence.

- Assignments - 30 points

- Workshop Submissions (use Times New Roman, 12, space 1.5)
- Craft and Workshop Readings and Weekly Responses (use TNR, 12, space 1.5)

You won't be evaluated by your talent or per word count, but for commitment and hard work. A carefully written and well revised submission will have a huge impact on the quality of discussions. Reading the assignments and preparing responses for the readings will also have a

substantial impact on the overall depth of the comments. Your work will be assessed in conjunction with your participation.

- Revised Portfolio — 30 points

The final portfolio will include: all writing assignments and workshop submissions.

- Extra credit - If possible, attend a literary event, museum or gallery exhibition or music concert and write a review of it (1-2 pages). Your grade will be bumped up half a mark.

4. Technology

Phones should be turned off. If you need to use a laptop, please let me know. Otherwise, a notebook and a pen is all you need (besides printed copies of a few selected texts and submissions). No electronic devices are permitted during the in-class writing time. We will evaluate our practices throughout the course and see what is working or not for our specific group.

5. Academic Honesty

There's zero tolerance for plagiarism. If you are struggling with turning in an assignment, please get in touch with me, rather than considering plagiarism. We will find a reasonable solution.

6. 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

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

7. Student Wellness Policy

Unless there is explicit evidence in the 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, can be seen as a cry for help, and will likely catch my attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting. 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. I am always available via email, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Counseling Services:

726 Broadway New York, NY 10003 (212) 998-4780

Wellness Center: 24-Hour Hotline: (212) 443-9999

Email: wellness.exchange@nyu.edu