

# Introduction to Prose and Poetry

CRWRI-UA.815.021

Eric Rubeo (he/him)

New York University | Fall 2022

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WHERE: **BOBST Room 836, Washington Square**  
WHEN: **Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00pm – 3:15pm**  
OFFICE HOURS: **in-person TBD, or by virtual appointment.**

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Phone: **(575)224.6690** (emergencies only, please!)

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**OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES:** In this class, we'll examine all three major literary disciplines—*fiction*, *poetry*, and *creative nonfiction*—while recognizing these terms are marketing distinctions, more than rigid genres. We'll read, we'll write. We'll attempt to examine different modes of art to articulate how, or if, they are successful. If we're lucky, we may discover new interests, new voices, new lenses with which to examine our world. Most importantly, we'll learn to think critically about how we use our words to communicate meaning and feeling.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:** Our class is divided into three major units:

**Weeks 1 – 5:** Fiction  
**Weeks 6 - 9:** Poetry  
**Weeks 10 – 14:** Creative Nonfiction

Within these major units we will have “Craft Days” and “Workshop Days.”

Craft days are more traditional classes where students come prepared to discuss the assigned readings (*see “Schedule”*). We will examine these texts through the lens of one or more specific craft element(s) or discuss them generally. We may also have in-class writings, guest lecturers, make-up days, etc. For each reading, you will write and submit a short response (300 – 500 words) demonstrating your engagement with the text.

Workshop days are when we discuss *each other's* work. Everyone will submit once per genre. **You submit one week before the date of your workshop.** On the first day of class, we'll create the workshop cycle detailing your individual submission date. Our workshop model will be a blend of the “traditional” model and Liz Lerman's [Critical Response Process](#). You will also submit to your peers, and to me, a workshop letter.

**ATTENDANCE:** Required, of course. Writing, and reading, is all about community and communication. There is no way to learn creative writing in a vacuum, and therefore you cannot meet course objectives without attending and participating.

**GRADES:** Your grade will be comprised of the following:

**PARTICIPATION (25%):** Your voice matters! We cannot, and will not, attempt to quantify the “quality” of your artistic work in the form of a grade; what’s more important *is your ability to articulate* your engagement with readings, and your own writing. To that end, I will be grading your participation. If you have trouble speaking up in class, let me know and we can arrange an alternate way of demonstrating your engagement. Participation is also where (unexcused) absence, repeated failure to disconnect from distracting devices, and general unruliness will be penalized.

**SHORT WRITINGS (15%):** For craft days, you’ll submit a short response to the assigned text. For workshop days, you’ll submit a workshop letter. Both writings will comprise this grade.

**WORKSHOP SUBMISSION (25%):** One week prior to the date of your workshop, you will submit to me via email your submission *in manuscript format*. (See “manuscript format” doc.) along with written answers to the *preworkshop questions*. Please do NOT email the class directly; that generates confusion and will make the class grumpy. During workshop, follow appropriate etiquette. You will workshop three times; each submission contributes to this grade.

**FINAL PORTFOLIO (Revision & Reflection) (35%):** To conclude our class, you will arrange a creative portfolio of your work in which *at least one piece has undergone a radical revision*. Your portfolio can include workshop submissions, in-class writing, or extracurricular work. You will also write a short, written reflection on your creative process, what you’ve learned, and your relationship with writing moving forward. Precise instructions on this requirement are forthcoming.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Plagiarism is obviously not tolerated. As required by NYU, any instance of plagiarism will be reported to the department without exception. In class, we will discuss the nuance of “found” or “stolen” art in a creative context. If you’re concerned, or have questions, please reach out!

**ELECTRONICS & other distractions:** Keep the phones and other distracting items put away. You may use laptops/tablets to take notes, only. Your engagement with class is reflected in your participation grade.

**DISABILITY DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:** Academic accommodations are available to any student with chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is hard of hearing. Students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, or at 726 Broadway (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) or at [www.nyu.edu/csdl](http://www.nyu.edu/csdl).

**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

Wellness.exchang@nyu.edu

**SCHEDULE:** (note: readings may change! I will, of course, put any changes in writing via email)

**Week 0 (9/1):**

**Thurs: INTRODUCTIONS**

Class overview, workshop schedule, course goals, “where we are”, in-class writing.

## FICTION

**Week 1 (9/6 and 9/8):**

**Tues: WHY WRITE?**

James Baldwin, “[The Creative Process](#)” (craft essay).

James Baldwin, “[The Artist’s Struggle for Integrity](#)” (audio).

Leslie Marmon Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective (craft).

James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (novel excerpt).

**Thurs: STORY STRUCTURE (Beginnings, Middles, and Ends)**

Kurt Vonnegut, “[Shape of Stories](#)” (craft video).

John Truby, “The Seven Key Steps of Story Structure” (craft essay)

Lance Olsen, “Possibility Spaces” (craft essay).

**Week 2 (9/13\* and 9/15):**

**Tues: CHARACTER & POINT OF VIEW**

Joseph Bates, “Nighttime Novelist” (craft essay).

Joseph Campbell, “The Heroes Journey” (video).

Lance Olsen, “characters: the metaphysics of the pronominal hoax” (craft essay).

Harry Bingham, “[Points of View in Fiction Writing](#)” (craft essay)

Amy Hempel, “[In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried](#)” (short story).

**Thurs: SETTING & DIALOGUE**

David Trotter “Dialogue, subtext, and exposition” (craft excerpt)

George Saunders, “Pastoralia” (novella—not the whole collection, also called *Pastoralia!*).

**Week 3 (9/20 and 9/22):**

**Tues: MOVEMENT**

“[Haruki Murakami, The Art of Fiction No. 182](#)” (online interview)

Haruki Murakami, “[Super-Frog Saves Tokyo](#)”

Liz Lerman, “Critical response Process” (pedagogy).

Liz Lerman, “The Three Roles” (pedagogy).

Felicia Rose Chavez, “Introduction to the Anti-Racist Writing Workshop” (prose excerpt).

**Thurs: WORKSHOP**

Writers 1 and 2, 3

**Week 4 (9/27 and 9/29):**

**Tues: FORM**

Tobias Wolf, "[Bullet in the Brain](#)"

Margaret Atwood, "Happy Endings" (short story).

**Thurs: WORKSHOP**

Writers 4, 5, and 6

**Week 5 (10/4 and 10/6):**

**Tues: WORKSHOP**

Writers 7, 8, and 9

**Thurs: WORKSHOP**

Writers 10, 11, and 12

## POETRY

**Week 6 (10/11 and 10/13):**

**Tues: NO CLASS** (Legislative Monday)

**Thurs: WHAT IS POETRY?**

Toni Morrison, "[And Other Writing Advice](#)" (craft)

In-class writing

**Week 7 (10/18 and 10/20):**

**Tues: WRITING FROM THE (living) HEART**

Assorted Poems by Leslie Silko, Claudia Rankine, Terrance Hayes, Lydia Davis

**Thurs: Poetry workshop** 1, 2, and 3

**Week 8 (10/25 and 10/27):**

**Tues: REVOLUTIONARY POETICS**

Frank, O'Hara, "[Personism](#)," Frank O'Hara (craft)

Grace Paley, "[Responsibility](#)" (poems)

Assorted Poems by Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, James Tate, Joy Harjo

**Thurs: Poetry workshop** 4, 5, and 6

**Week 9 (11/1 and 11/3):**

**Tues: Poetry workshop** 7, 8, and 9

**Thurs: Poetry workshop** 10, 11, and 12

## CREATIVE NONFICTION

### Week 10 (11/8 and 11/10):

#### Tues: JOURNALISM v CNF

Kayla Dean "[Creative Nonfiction and Literary Journalism: what's the difference?](#)" (craft.)

David Treuer, "[Return the National Parks to the Tribes](#)" (essay)

#### Thurs: MEMOIR

William Zinsser, "Writing About Yourself: The Memoir" (craft essay)

Laura Barton, "The Man Who Rewrote his life."

James Frey, "A Million Little Pieces," excerpt

### Week 11 (11/15 and 11/17):

#### Tues: FICTION v NONFICTION

David Shields, "Reality Hunger" (prose excerpts)

Jim Finkel and John D'Gata, "Lifespan of a Fact" (excerpts)

Kurt Vonnegut, "Slaughterhouse Five" (fiction(?) excerpt)

#### Thurs: REVISION STRATEGIES

(Guest?) lecture

Bring a text you've written

### Week 12 (11/22 and 11/24):

Tues: CNF workshop 1, 2, and 3

Thurs: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Recess)

### Week 13 (11/29 and 12/1):

#### Tues: NARRATIVITY IN DOCUMENTARY

Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Act of Killing* (movie – Hulu)

Lucia Nagib, "Film as Death: The Act of Killing" (essay).

Thurs: CNF workshop 4, 5, and 6

### Week 14 (12/6 and 12/8):

#### Tues: FINAL THOUGHTS

William Zinsser, "The Tyranny of the Final Product" (essay).

David Foster Wallace, "This is Water" (audio)

David Foster Wallace, "[This is Water](#)" (transcript)

Thurs: CNF workshop 7, 8, and 9

### Week 15 (12/13 and 12/15):

Tues: CNF workshop 10, 11 and 12

Thurs: NO CLASS (Final Portfolios due!)