What one word must never be said?
What two things shall never be seen?
— Muriel Rukeyser

Stop thinking about saving your face. Think of our lives and tell us your particularized world. Make up a story...We will not blame you if your reach exceeds your grasp.
— Toni Morrison

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course has three main goals:

1) To cultivate the practice of deep listening, within and beyond the classroom
2) To develop habits of close reading that privilege encounter over apprehension
3) To form a community of writers marked by curiosity, risk, and hospitality

Through the study of poetry and prose, we will learn how to listen—to the musicality of words, to the inner voice, and to each other—aiming to be receptive to the world within and around us. We will learn how to listen generously, seeking to encounter the living thing beneath the words that surface on the page. We will resist correctional, carceral, and colonial impulses to tame the unruly utterance, pin down an image that exceeds our grasp, coerce legibility, scorn non-standard syntax, or capture life experience once and for all.

When a work of writing frustrates our ability to apprehend or offends our sensibilities, we will not rush to fix, translate, or dismiss it. We will draw near—with even greater curiosity, compassion, and a closer reading. We will ask what the language knows that we don’t. We will notice what a line, image, or metaphor is doing and ask what it wants to be doing. We will trust the voice—wherever it wants to go, giving up egos, agendas, and ideas of rightness in order to follow it. Through workshops, writing exercises, and close reading, we will challenge our assumptions of what belongs together in a poem or work of prose, and welcome the strangers who will most certainly appear at the edges of our imaginations, asking us to make room for them in the languages we create.
REQUIRED MATERIALS

Books—
- Don Mee Choi, *DMZ Colony*
- Aracelis Girmay, *The Black Maria*
- Bhanu Kapil, *How To Wash a Heart*
- Solmaz Sharif, *Customs*
- ...plus selected readings

Journal - Keep a notebook that you'll use exclusively for this class—to jot down notes and inspiration, to reflect on process, and to respond to in-class and take-home writing exercises designed to challenge writing habits and generate raw material.

Folder - Please dedicate a folder or binder to this class to keep handouts, drafts, and revisions.

Copies - Prepare to bring 13 copies of your poem or prose piece to workshop.

GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creative Work</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leading Reading Ritual</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Activities</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Participation (30%)** - This class rewards close reading and generous engagement. When you give full attention to your peers’ comments and writing, you will grow as a writer. When you study the assigned readings with depth and care, coming prepared to pose questions and share insights, you will gain tools to reflect on your own work. You will be encouraged to speak and to make room for others to speak. The success of this class depends largely on our collective willingness to sound out our thinking and feeling with courage, clarity, and curiosity. Your embodied participation in class will pay off in private; you will find that remaining engaged and open to the meandering nature of live discussion will develop the muscles required to take risks and seize openings to express yourself on the page.

If participating in this manner is difficult, please reach out, and we will figure out how to make this workable for you. You are expected to come to class having completed all the readings, having prepared a response to the readings, having prepared thoughtful comments on your peers’ writing*, and having made a good faith effort to prepare your own writing for workshop. If you do all these things, you will receive full credit.
A note on workshop comments: At minimum, you will provide observations, questions based on these observations, and a suggested revision (change in form, style, content, line edits, etc.).

Creative Work (40%) - You are expected to complete in-class and take-home writing prompts. You will submit around five poems for workshop, written this semester. You will also submit revised poems based on workshop feedback at the end of the semester. In lieu of a final portfolio, you will assemble a bound chapbook of revised poems to distribute to me and your classmates.

Leading a Ritual of Reading (20%) - On one day this semester, you will lead a ritual of reading to open our discussion on the week’s assigned text(s). This requires 1) reading aloud a short passage (<1 page) or single poem that stood out to you, 2) sharing a supplementary quote (e.g. from interviews or essays) that highlights the writer’s artistic and thematic concerns, and 3) offering 3 questions prepared in advance to prompt discussion. Consider this practice as a way of conjuring the writer’s presence in the room, rather than presenting knowledge; the selected excerpt, questions, and quote you bring will provide a frame and foundation for further response.

Field Activities (10%) - In at least one class session, we will venture outdoors and/or through a museum, and practice listening out in the world, where writers live most of their lives. You will be required to pay attention to what the world might be speaking to you. You will write a response to what you have heard. If you miss this class session, you will be required to do this activity on your own.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are allowed TWO absences. To accommodate long-term illnesses or medical situations, I can work with you in coordination with a medical professional. Missing more than two classes, unless due to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances, will result in your final grade dropping a whole letter grade (e.g. A- will become a B-). Leaving early or arriving more than 15 minutes late to class will count as an absence. It is your responsibility to contact a peer to follow up on missed work, including in-class writing exercises.

TECH POLICY

Please refrain from using electronic devices in class—including laptops, cellphones, and smart watches—unless expressly permitted or prompted by me. This class requires that you pay close attention to those around you, and this policy trains you to minimize distractions when you’re writing on your own. While we may occasionally use a laptop to share media or other information, you should come prepared with your journal, assigned texts, and a pen. This is all you will need to participate well.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS
Late assignments will not receive a grade higher than a C. This includes assignments that were completed but not printed or copied when required. Late assignments must still be printed and handed in during the following class; I will not accept late assignments by email. If you have technical difficulties or extenuating circumstances, please reach out to notify me.

**FORMATTING**

All submitted work must include, in the top-right corner, your name, your email, the date, the course number, the title, and my name. Please use standard, serif typefaces (e.g. Times New Roman, Garamond) in 12-point font, black ink. No Comic Sans.

**OFFICE HOURS**

You are encouraged to use office hours as an opportunity to get in-depth feedback on your work, ask questions about readings, request more suggested readings, or discuss any concerns, fears, or interests you have as it pertains to writing. Please make an appointment by emailing me.

**TRUST**

All of these requirements—participating in conversation, facilitating discussion, offering your voice, not disrupting class by being late or being on your phone—are designed to cultivate an atmosphere of trust, hospitality, and mutual responsibility. Writing is hard, and it is even harder to share our writing aloud. And to receive feedback. All that is shared in this class, from poems to comments, is a risk. While you are in this classroom, you will be taken seriously as writers and encouraged to regard each other in this manner.

You are encouraged to exchange contact information with your peers to continue discussions of work, life, and more outside of class. Many lifelong friendships among writers begin in workshop settings like this one.

**Note:** Please do not share *any* writing submitted by your peers to anyone outside the classroom.

**STUDENT WELLNESS**

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 my attention.

Before submitting work that contains the content above that might be interpreted as such, please notify me by email to put this work in context. If you do feel you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please
don’t hesitate to reach out to me, so that I can put you in touch with the NYU Wellness Center. You may also reach out to the NYU Wellness Center Hotline: (212) 443-9999.

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. You can register with the NYU Moses Center for Students with Disabilities by calling (212) 998-4980 or visiting 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please review NYU’s Academic Integrity guidelines, particularly on plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE: WORKSHOP DATES & DEADLINES
(subject to change, based on class size & pace)

Regular deadlines:
- Workshop submissions are due by 11:59 PM the Sunday before workshop.
- Workshop comments are due at the beginning of class the Tuesday following workshop.
- Readings should be done by the class date listed.

WEEK ONE  Course Overview

TU, SEPT 6  Read:  Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize Lecture

Next class:
- Bring a poem or a brief passage (~ 1 paragraph) that has made a home in you. Come prepared to discuss why.

TH, SEPT 8  Demo workshop

Read:  Audre Lorde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury”

WEEK TWO  Slowness, Loitering & Pleasure

TU, SEPT 13  Read:  Kameelah Janan Rasheed, No New Theories excerpt

TH, SEPT 15  Read:  Ross Gay, Book of Delights excerpts

“Loitering is Delightful”
“Sharing Love”

Field Activity: Slowly walk the neighborhood. Pay attention to what stands out to you & invites pause. Take note/photos. Free write: What does the image/scene stir up? What associations arise? What delights you? What is it teaching you?

WEEK THREE

Workshop

TU, SEPT 20

Group B

TH, SEPT 22

Group A

WEEK FOUR

Close Looking & Study

TBD

OFFSITE: WHITNEY MUSEUM

Free access with NYU ID

TU, SEPT 27

Due: Workshop comments

Read: Aracelis Girmay, The Black Maria

TH, SEPT 29

Read: Aracelis Girmay, The Black Maria (cont.)

Solmaz Sharif, “Vulnerability Study”

Quan Barry, “triage”

Take home: Pick a subject of study (a color, an activity, a human condition, a creature, a street corner). List at least 20 observations and associations. Circle 5 of the strongest examples. Assemble a poem.

WEEK FIVE

Non-Arrivals, Endings & Openings

TU, OCT 4

Read: Solmaz Sharif, Customs

TH, OCT 6

Read: Solmaz Sharif, Customs (cont.)

In class: Collaborative ghazal

WEEK SIX

Workshop
TU, OCT 11  

Group A

TH, OCT 13  

Group B

WEEK SEVEN  
Translation, Interiority & Burdens of Speech

TU, OCT 18  

NO CLASS (LEGISLATIVE DAY)

TH, OCT 20  

Read:  Claudia Rankine, *Citizen* excerpt  
       Layli Long Soldier, *Whereas* excerpts  
       “38”  
       “Whereas”  
       Jennifer S. Cheng, “Hikikomori: Salt Constellations”  
       Nhã Thuyên, “which orientation to sea”

Take home: Revise a poem using “you,” “we,” or “she/he/they”. Come prepared to discuss how this shifted your work.

WEEK EIGHT  
Generative Frictions

TU, OCT 25  

Read:  Chen Chen, “A Small Book of Questions”  
       Solmaz Sharif, “Drone”

Take home: Write a letter to an absent presence in your life (a ghost), a concept, a historical figure, a larger-than-life figure, or a person with whom you have an intimate, estranged, or ambiguous relationship.

TH, OCT 27  

Bookmaking workshop

WEEK NINE  
Workshop

TU, NOV 1  

Group A

TH, NOV 3  

Group B

WEEK TEN  
Hybridity & History: (Re)Interpreting the Signs

TU, NOV 8  

Read:  Don Mee Choi, *DMZ Colony*
TH, NOV 10  Read:  Don Mee Choi, *DMZ Colony* (cont.)

Take home: *Choose a document* (e.g. *historical image, family photo, artwork, government decree, etc.*). *Respond to your document with a fictionalized account of a historical event, a journal entry, a drawing, a collage, a letter, etc.*

**WEEK ELEVEN**  Myths, Parables & Speculative History

TU, NOV 15  Due:  Workshop comments

Read:  Maaza Mengiste, *The Shadow King* excerpts

Excerpt (chorus)

Excerpt (opening) / Audio

Project 3541

Divya Victor, “*J is for Jarasandha*”

Next class: *Bring in a photograph from your history (broadly defined).*

TH, NOV 17  Photographic archive activity


“*An Unnamed Girl, A Speculative History*”

Ingrid Rojas Contreras, *Fruit of the Drunken Tree* excerpt

Robin Coste Lewis, *The Voyage of the Sable Venus* interview & excerpt

**WEEK TWELVE**  Small Group Workshop

TU, NOV 22  *Workshop in groups of three.*

TH, NOV 24  NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING (THANKSGIVING)

**WEEK THIRTEEN**  Housing the Stranger

TU, NOV 29  Due:  Workshop comments

Read:  Bhanu Kapil, *How to Wash a Heart*

Next class: *Bring in an orphaned or discarded fragment (a line, passage, word) from*
your work this semester.

TH, DEC 1  Small Group Workshop

Workshop in groups of three.

WEEK FOURTEEN  Radical Re-visions

TU, DEC 6  Read:  Raúl Zurita, *INRI* excerpt

Ilya Kaminsky, *Deaf Republic* excerpt

Aracelis Girmay, “Praise Song for the Donkey”

Take home: *Radically revise one of your pieces using a technique offered in class.*

TH, DEC 8  Manifestos

Read:  Cristina Rivera Garza, “*Keep Writing*” excerpt

WEEK FIFTEEN  Celebratory Reading

TU, DEC 13  Chapbook distribution, reading, & party!