

Creative Writing: Introduction to Poetry and Prose

Instructor: Suchita Chadha

Semester: Fall '22

Section number: CRWRI-UA.815.011

Schedule: Wednesdays & Fridays, 11:00am–12:15pm

Office hours: By Appointment

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“The page is the fingerprint of a selfhood articulated by language.”

- Ocean Vuong

Overview

Framed by the themes of “on writing” and “on revision” we’ll go through a variety of larger topics through the semester, discussing specific craft elements (like imagery, sound, plot, pacing, etc.) as they fall within these broader themes.

Objectives

The goal is for us to explore a variety of writers and styles within poetry and prose, while expanding our vocabulary and knowledge of the craft. At the same time, we’ll be regularly workshoping each other’s work and have in-class/take home writing exercises, to balance out our reading discussions with writing.

Grading (Attendance; Plagiarism)

Breakdown

30% Attendance & participation: (in class during discussion and workshops, as well as written feedback — a copy of which you will provide to me, in addition to the writer)

30% Workshop pieces; and your choice of reading responses and/or writing prompt submissions (you can do both if you really feel like it)

30% Final portfolio containing everything you’ve written this semester, with at least 2-3 revisions (these could be revisions of your workshop pieces, or of your writing prompt submissions)

10% Literary Event “Presentation” or Written Response — Attend (at least) one reading, craft talk, or other literary event of any type during the semester and either hand in a written response to it, or do a mini (2-5 minute) presentation about it during the class

Every week, you’ll be given a writing prompt related to the topic of the week’s discussion. It’s up to you whether you’d like to submit a short reading response to one the readings from that week, or a writing submission based on the prompt from that week. I’ll provide some feedback on these.

Attendance

You will be allowed one unexcused absence during the semester — though not on a week when you're being workshopped (if you need to reschedule your workshop, please contact me as far in advance as possible). After that, absences will result in the reduction of your letter grade by a third (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.). Considerable tardiness (say, 30+ minutes) will count as absence.

Plagiarism

Please don't. We can have a whole lesson devoted to ekphrasis, collage, and appropriation in poetry if you're interested, but plagiarism is different and unnecessary, so don't do it, as it will result in your failing this course. Please reach out to me if you have any concerns about deadlines or anything else that might make it difficult for you to complete an assignment and we'll figure it out together.

Workshop Process, Etiquette, & Respect

Our workshop days will be on Fridays, and everyone will have a chance to be workshopped 4 times. The expectation will be for you to submit 2 poems, and 2 works of prose (either fiction or nonfiction). If you're solely interested in poetry, I'd still urge you to try a fiction or nonfiction piece, though one of your prose submissions can be a prose poem. Similarly, if you're solely interested in prose, at least one poem should be in verse. The idea of this course is to expand your boundaries and try new things or things you don't usually do!

I will ask you to submit your piece on the Wednesday, at the start of class, in the week you are being workshopped, so that everyone has a chance to read and make comments on your work prior to coming to the workshop session on Fridays. Fiction and nonfiction should be submitted double-spaced, and be no longer than 10 pages. For poetry, submit a single poem, with any kind of formatting, but no longer than 10 pages.

Workshop's should be a safe space—one where critique is shared respectfully rather than cruelly. The point is to be helpful to each other, and offer thoughts from a craft perspective, not just your personal preferences.

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

Website: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

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.

Schedule & Assignments

Week 1: INTRO

Friday, September 2, 2022

- Introductions, syllabus review, some in-class writing

Week 2: ON WRITING

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

- *Readings due:* Seamus Heaney, "Feelings into Words" [pdf], Tracy K. Smith on Lorca, "[Survival in Two Worlds at Once: Federico Garcia Lorca and Duende](#)"

Friday, September 9, 2022

- *Readings due:* Carl Dennis: "The Voice of Authority" [pdf], Gregory Orr, "Four Temperaments and the Forms of Poetry" [pdf], Vivian Gornick, *The Situation and the Story: The Art of the Personal Narrative* [excerpt, pdf]

Week 3: CHARACTER/PERSONA

Wednesday, September 14, 2022

- *Readings due:* Jennifer Egan, "[Black Box](#)," Poems packet including Patricia Smith, Karthika Nair
- *Workshop group 1 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, September 16, 2022

- Workshop Group 1

Week 4: FORM

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

- *Readings due:* Robert Hass, "One Body: Some Notes of Form" [pdf], [mixed pdf of multiple types of verse form, including: pantoum, sonnet, sestina, quatrains, ghazals, etc.)

- *Workshop group 2 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, September 23, 2022

- Workshop Group 2

Week 5: FORM (con't...)

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

- Mixed pdf of hybrid & interesting forms like contrapuntals and prose poems, as well flash fiction/creative nonfiction, including Tarfia Faizullah, "[Aubade Ending with the Death of a Mosquito](#)," K-Ming Chang "[Closet Space](#)," Robert Hass "A Story About a Body," Mahmoud Darwish "The House Murdered"
- *Workshop group 3 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, September 30, 2022

- Workshop Group 3

Week 6: VOLTA/ORGANIZATION

Wednesday, October 5, 2022

- *Readings due:* Tablo, *Pieces of You* [excerpts, pdf]. Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 1 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, October 7, 2022

- Workshop Group 1

Week 7: TIME

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

- *Readings due:* Shruti Swamy, *A House is a Body* [excerpts, pdf] Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 2 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, October 14, 2022

- Workshop Group 2

Week 8: PLACE

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

- *Readings due:* Souvamkham Thammavongsa, *How to Pronounce Knife* [excerpts, pdf], Joan Didion "Goodbye to All That" [excerpts, pdf] Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 3 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, October 21, 2022

- Workshop Group 3

Week 9: MEMORY

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

- *Readings due:* Kazim Ali, "[Fall 2011: A Journal](#)," Ocean Vuong, "[Reimagining Masculinity](#)," Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 1 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, October 28, 2022

- Workshop Group 1

Week 10: GRIEF

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

- *Readings due:* Jo Ann Beard, "Fourth State of Matter" [pdf]; Natalie Wee, "[After the Atlanta Spa Shootings, We Sat in a Field](#)," and Agha Shahid Ali, "From Amherst to Kashmir"
- *Workshop group 2 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, November 4, 2022

- Workshop Group 2

Week 11: MAGIC REALISM/MYTH

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

- *Readings due:* Salman Rushdie, "[The Prophet's Hair](#)," Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 3 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, November 11, 2022

- Workshop Group 3

Week 12: ISOLATION

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

- *Readings due:* Ottessa Moshfegh, *Homesick for Another World* [excerpt, pdf]; Poems packet.
- *Workshop group 1 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, November 18, 2022

- Workshop Group 1

Week 13 – NO CLASSES

Wednesday, November 23, 2022 - FALL BREAK

Friday, November 25, 2022 - THANKSGIVING RECESS

No classes this week, take a break, but do think about what piece you'll bring in next week to share with the class.

Week 14: CLASS SOURCED

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

- Everyone will bring in either a poem or work of short prose of their choosing, (any theme) that we'll read and discuss. Expect to talk about the piece, and maybe the writer for a few minutes before we open it up for the rest of the class.
- *Workshop group 2 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, December 2, 2022

- Workshop Group 2

Week 15: ON REVISION

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

- *Readings Due:* Kim Addonizio & Dorianne Laux, "The Energy of Revision" from *The Poet's Companion* [pdf]; Peter Ho Davies, [The Art of Revision: Black Box](#) [excerpt]
- *Workshop group 3 hands out copies of their work.*

Friday, December 9, 2022

- Workshop Group 3

Week 16: FINAL READING & PORTFOLIOS DUE

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

- Class Reading

Friday, December 16, 2022 — NO CLASS

- Final portfolios due. More details on format/how to submit to be provided closer to the deadline.

Book List

All readings will either be provided as pdf packets or as links to online content, so there's no need to acquire any books. Where possible, I'll try to hand paper copies the week before the reading to limit the amount of laptop/tablet usage during class.