

Caroline Waring, carolinegioiosa@gmail.com  
Program in Creative Writing  
Office Hours: By appointment

## INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING

Mon. & Wed. 12:30pm – 1:45pm. Classroom [].  
Fall 2022

### COURSE GOALS

- ◇ **Understand and articulate why some sentences “sound” better than others.** How does word placement affect the whole of a sentence? How can we manipulate the rhythm of our sentences? What kind of modifiers excite us, and why?
- ◇ **Build a vocabulary in the language of craft:** conflict, desire, theme, points of view, plot, subplot, image, repetition, diction, voice, structure
- ◇ **Critically and constructively assess published and unpublished work.** In this course, we will use the same terms to describe our classmates’ first drafts and works by writers like Anne Carson, Heinrich von Kleist, and Anton Chekhov.

### STRUCTURE

Our classes will be split between craft seminars and workshops, as well as prose and poetry. On Mondays, we’ll go over the assigned reading and discuss different elements of craft (i.e., structure, conflict, diction). The night before our Monday classes, you’ll post a response to the reading on our class forum. We might talk about how David Foster Wallace revises his essays, or break down a story by Chekhov, or play with Elizabeth Willis’ poetry.

On Wednesdays, we’ll have workshop—a structured time to offer comments on your classmates’ drafts. These workshops will be open and inviting spaces, a time to share your reading experiences. We won’t talk about grammar or whether you “liked” a piece or not. Instead, we’ll discuss what’s “working,” what’s “not working,” and the choices that the author made. By the end of the class, you’ll have written two prose pieces and (at least) two poems.

### ASSIGNMENTS

- **Critical reflections (10% of grade).** Each week, we will read a short story, some poems, or part of a novel (or a kaleidoscopic combination of all these things). Please write a short, critical response to these readings (between 200 and 400 words, no longer than a single-spaced page). Consider asking questions or elaborating on your candid reactions. Post these responses on-time so that I can read them prior to our Monday class. If you are submitting a short story or poem that week, you **do not** have to submit a response.
- **Writing exercises (10% of grade).** There will be multiple informal, in-class writing exercises throughout the course. Please send them to me (either by hand or by email) before the next Sunday at midnight. Due dates are marked on our course schedule. Grades will be based on completion, not quality—but please treat these as opportunities to begin, develop, and transform your workshop submissions.
- **Workshop letters (10% of grade).** You will write a letter in response to each of your classmates’ workshop submissions. This letter will directly address the author. Tell the author what you thought was working about the piece, what wasn’t working, and why. Ask questions—was anything confusing or left unsaid? Be specific—pull out word

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choices that you loved or identify a character who's dialogue you found entertaining. We'll go over a couple examples of workshop letters in our first class. You **must** email this letter to me (if typed) or show it to me during class. It's a real bummer when you're writing details letters to your peers and not receiving anything back. You will also make in-line edits to the pieces you receive (i.e., underlining phrases that you liked, circling clunky language, asking a question, or marking where you laughed).

- **Workshop submissions (20% of grade).** You will have four opportunities to submit work—two prose and two poetry submissions. The prose should be between four and twelve pages. The poetry should be between one and two pages. Put your name on workshop submissions. Number your pages. All work should be typed, double-spaced, in size 12 font, with one-inch margins. All prose submissions should be printed and handed out one week before workshop. All poetry submissions should be printed and handed out the Monday before workshop.
- **Final portfolio (25% of grade).** For your final project, you will turn in your submissions—your prose and your poetry. At least one of these submissions must be revised. You will write a one-page note on these revisions and why you did them. Further details TK.
- **Participation (25% of grade).** Your presence counts in this class—preparation (reading, rereading; marking, remarking), attendance, and participation (including “expressive silence,” as my old professor would say) are mandatory. We're all sitting here together, dinner table style—come prepared to think with and against these texts, with and against each other. Say what you have to say, if only for my benefit.

**ATTENDANCE:** Your attendance is required in class, barring exceptions laid out by university policy. This includes arriving in class on time. Email me in advance if you expect to be absent, or immediately following the missed class. For each unexcused absence, you will be docked a half-letter grade (i.e., B+ becomes B). If you are fifteen minutes late to class – or more – it will count as a half-absence.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** Keep your electronic devices off during class. Notes must be taken by hand. If you need to use your laptop to read a poem or short story, so be it—but please, only take out the laptop when necessary.

**EMAIL POLICY:** I do my best to respond all emails messages with 24 hours. Please do not send multiple messages on the same topic before the initial 24-hour window has passed. If you have not heard from me after this period, you are welcome to write again.

**PLAGARISM:** What's the point of taking a creative writing class if you're plagiarizing? All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department.

**NYU 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.

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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>

### SCHEDULE

- Sept. 5 (M) Course overview, workshop etiquette, set workshop schedule.  
In-class discussion: Chekhov exercise.
- Sept. 7 (W) *Mariette in Ecstasy*, Ron Hansen (Part I, pgs. 1-46).  
In-class exercise: Write about a confined space, e.g., a room, a backyard, a supermarket.
- Sept. 12 (M) Submit reading response, workshop pieces, writing exercise by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
*Mariette in Ecstasy* (Part II, pgs. 47-107)
- Sept. 14 (W) Group A workshops (prose).
- Sept. 19 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
*Mariette in Ecstasy* (Part III, pgs. 111-179). Poems by Elizabeth Willis.
- Sept. 21 (W) Group B workshops (prose).
- Sept. 26 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Works by Charles D'Ambrosio, Joy Williams. Poems by Carolyn Forché.
- Sept. 28 (W) Group C workshops (prose).
- Oct. 3 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red* (Part I).
- Oct. 5 (W) Group A workshops (poetry).
- Oct. 10 (M) FALL BREAK (no reading response due)
- Oct. 12 (W) Group B workshops (poetry)
- Oct. 17 (M) Submit writing exercise & reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red* (Part II).
- Oct. 19 (W) Group C workshops (poetry).

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- Oct. 24 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Works by James Alan McPherson, Alice Monroe.
- Oct. 26 (W) Group A workshops (prose).
- Oct. 31 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Works by Lorrie Moore, David Foster Wallace.
- Nov. 2 (W) Group B workshops (prose).
- Nov. 7 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Works by Julio Cortazar.
- Nov. 9 (W) Group C workshops (prose).
- Nov. 14 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Poems by Claude McKay, Nathaniel Mackey, William Carlos Williams.
- Nov. 16 (W) Group A workshops (poetry).
- Nov. 21 (M) In-class exercise.
- Nov. 23 (W) THANKSGIVING BREAK
- Nov. 28 (M) Submit class exercise by Sunday, 11:59pm (no reading response due).  
Poems by Rilke, Basho, Ezra Pound.
- Nov. 30 (W) Group B workshops (poetry).
- Dec. 5 (M) Submit reading response by Sunday, 11:59pm.  
Poems by Charles Olsen, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley.
- Dec. 7 (W) Group C workshops (poetry).
- Dec. 12 (M) Revision class – David Foster Wallace’s *A Supposedly Fun Thing* galley.
- Dec. 14 (W) Last class—let’s bring in some of your favorite pieces and celebrate together.