

INTRODUCTION TO PROSE AND POETRY

CRWRI-UA.815.017

Fall 2022, Mon/Wed 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.

Room Assignment: BOBST 837

Instructor: Ian Fishman

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed after class or by appointment

I can't describe myself as a poet. I'm the author of some kind of thinking about writing.

— Lucy Ives

Everything escapes and disperses. Continually bring it all back to one.

— Robert Bresson

Course Objective:

What are we here to do? What we are here to do is to attempt to organize our thoughts and practices about writing creatively, as impermeable of a notion that may seem. The fact of the matter is that writing, and transitively reading as a writer is a process shrouded in confusion. Why do we write? Why do certain pieces of literature move us? Should I have eaten that large bowl of granola last night around 4 am? What is a poem supposed to look like exactly? How should we delineate nonfiction from fiction? How do we best relay memories? We will be thinking about all of these questions throughout the course of the semester, as well as any questions you may be mediating in your own lives. You will all be workshoping your own writing and participating in the workshops on your classmates' writings. Ideally, a workshop environment acts as an incubator for everyone's work — the easiest way to ensure this type of environment is by completing readings (assigned texts and your peers' works) and participating in classroom discussions. The most cursory objective of this course is to create a literary atmosphere wherein everyone feels respected and comfortable to be themselves, as that is the type of environment that fosters the greatest forms of literary exploration, experimentation, and the ultimate expansion of a toolbox of compositional devices to deploy putting pen to paper.

Organization:

Our typical class week will consist of a craft component on Mondays and a workshop component on Wednesdays. Craft is essentially what we read and how we talk about our readings to figure out how things got written. I will be disseminating reading materials weekly via email. Please try to print out readings; I'd like to minimize digital interactions in class whenever possible. Workshop days we will be reading each other's writing and providing feedback and critique. Print out your classmates' readings and mark up their writings with your thoughts — this is a must. Workshop groups will be assigned on the first day of class.

Coursework / Grading:

Attendance and Participation: (30%) - This is a relatively easy task. Show up on time attentive and ready to express your ideas about the assigned readings as well as your classmates' work. Both workshop and craft, like most things in life, are discussion-based. Writing is a practice that involves a great deal of introspection and intrapersonal meditation. With that being said, interpersonal sound-boarding of your and your peers' writings is an essential component of becoming a better writer. Without input from others, it can be difficult to figure out what sort of writing it is you would like to write. I would like to do as many in-class writing exercises as we can during craft classes. I'd like you all to bring a pen/pencil and a notebook to class so we can write longhand. If you can't be in any particular class for any reason please try to let me know (even if it's the morning of class!). I understand we live in an intense world and that everyone needs a respite from things from time to time. You will be allowed two unexcused absences after which each subsequent absence will subtract 5% of your final grade. If you come in over 20 minutes late more than three times I will begin to deduct 1% off of your final grade for each subsequent tardiness.

Workshop Responsibilities: (30%) - There will be three workshop groups which I will divide the class into, and each workshop group will have the opportunity to be workshopped three times over the course of the semester. There will be three genre-specific cycles of the workshop: poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction. The first cycle of workshop will be focused on poems, the second focused on fiction and the third you will choose between poetry or prose. Each workshop group is expected to submit their work to the class either via email or BrightSpace the Sunday before their workshop week. If you'd like to print out your workshop materials and pass them out in class a week ahead of time, that is also more than cool. Feedbacking your classmates is an absolute must. Give extensive written commentary. I will be ensuring that this occurs throughout the semester in the classroom. We will discuss etiquette collectively.

Recitation: (5%) - You will memorize a poem and then recite it for the class. It's super fun I promise. I will be doing it with you also.

Office Hours: (10%) - None of my close friends really attended office hours in college; I always found meeting with my professors to be one of the more formative collegiate experiences. You are expected to meet with me once or twice during the semester to discuss your approach to writing and we can get to know each other a bit more. I am a Gallatin grad after all.

Outside Reading Attendance: (5%) - There are innumerable wonderful readings happening across the city every week. The NYU CWP has an outstanding reading series every semester (these readings tend to be Thursday and Friday evenings), and there are readings at bookstores in all boroughs. Make time to attend a reading this semester and write a page about the experience, the writing you heard, and the performance you saw.

Final Portfolio: (20%) - A collection of all workshop pieces, which are to be revised before the conclusion of the semester, as well as one more short TBD piece of writing.

Plagiarism:

- Please do not do this. Any discovery of plagiarism will result in an immediate failure of the course.

Lateness Policy:

- Similar to tardiness, excessive lateness of workshop comments will detrimentally impact your grade.

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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, or at 726 Broadway (2nd floor) or at:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>

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.

[First Day: Introductions, Syllabus, Flarf Poetics]

Wed, Sept. 7th:

Readings due—

Drew Gardner's "Why do I hate Flarf so much?":

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/52689/why-do-i-hate-flarf-so-much>

Poems by Nada Gordon:

<https://brooklynrail.org/2015/04/poetry/nada-gordon>

Interview with K. Silem Mohammed:

<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/k-silem-mohammad-phoned-in-5/>

(Read the interview and listen to the Soundcloud recording both)

[Week 1: Dailiness/Ordinariness]

Mon, Sept. 12th:

Readings due—

Simone White's "Kettle to Pot" & "Don't nuzzle me fucker-maker":

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/92313/kettle-to-pot>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/92315/don39t-nuzzle-me-fucker-maker>

Raymond Carver's "Gazebo"

Wed, Sept. 14th:

Readings due—

Poems by Ted Berrigan, Arda Collins, Maged Zaher, Amanda Nadelberg, Laura Theobald

Zachary German's *Thank You*:

<http://www.afvpress.com/files/pdf/zachary-german-thank-you.pdf>

GROUP 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 9/18

[Week 2: Epistolary Writing]

Mon, Sept. 19th:

Readings due—

Excerpts of Joe Wenderoth's *Letters to Wendy's*

Tao Lin and Ellen Kennedy's *Hikikomori*: <http://www.bearparade.com/hikikomori/>

Lori White's "Postcards from the Road":

<https://kenyonreview.org/journal/summer-2007/selections/postcards-from-the-road/>

Wed, Sept. 21st:

WORKSHOP GROUP 1

GROUP 2 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 9/25

[Week 3: Hybrid Texts]

Mon, Sept. 26th:

Readings due—

Excerpts of works by Megan Boyle, Daniel Poppick, David Markson, Sawako Nakayasu

Julia Cho's *You: A Short Play*: <https://yalereview.org/article/julia-cho-you-short-play>

Wed, Sept. 28th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 2

GROUP 3 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 10/2

[Week 4: Parataxis]

Mon, Oct. 3rd:

Readings due—

Poems by Emily Kendal Frey, Geoffrey Nutter, Fred Moten, Harmony Holiday, Heather Christle

Don DeLillo's "Coming Sun. Mon. Tues.":

<https://kenyonreview.org/kr-online-issue/don-delillo-342846/>

Sam Pink's "Dragon":

<https://lithub.com/dragon/>

Wed, Oct. 5th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 3

GROUP 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 10/9

[Week 5: Persona]

Mon, Oct. 10th:

NO CLASS SCHEDULED—

FALL BREAK! CLASS MEETS THE FOLLOWING DAY - TUESDAY, 10/11

Tues, Oct. 11th:

Readings due—

Poems by Ai, Rita Dove, Tony Tost

Tristan Tzara's *Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love*:

https://www.ubu.com/papers/tzara_feeble.html

Excerpts of Fernando Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*

Wed, Oct. 12th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 1

GROUP 2 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 10/16

[Week 6: Microscopic Literature]

Mon, Oct. 17th:

Readings due—

Poems by Kobayashi Issa, Kit Robinson, Michael O'Brien, Graham Foust, Aram Saroyan, Lorine Niedecker, Hannah Brooks-Motl, Dan Beachy-Quick, Larry Eigner

Excerpts of Richard Chiem's *You Private Person*, Zac Smith's *Everything Is Totally Fine*,
The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis

Wed, Oct 19th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 2

GROUP 3 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 10/23

[Week 7: Oulipo and Conceptualism]

Mon, Oct. 24th:

Readings due—

Excerpts of works by Raymond Queneau, Monica de la Torre, Lev Rubinstein, Italo Calvino, Robert Fitterman, Michael Gottlieb

Wed, Oct 26th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 3

GROUP 1 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 10/30

[Week 8: Contemporary American Surrealism/Absurdism]

Mon, Oct. 31st:

Poems by Luke Bloomfield, Wendy Xu, Michael Earl Craig, Chris Cheney, Mike Young, Jackie Wang, Cecily Iddings, Aaron Kunin, Frank Stanford

Brian Evenson's "No Matter Which Way We Turned"

Excerpts of James Tate's *Dreams of a Robot Dancing Bee*

Wed, Nov. 2nd:

WORKSHOP GROUP 1

GROUP 2 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 11/6

[Week 9: Image]

Mon, Nov. 7th:

Readings due—

Poems by William Carlos Williams, Sarah Nicholson, Lisa Robertson, Nathaniel Farrell, Chelsey Minnis, Dorothea Lasky

Fielding Dawson's "Father"

Excerpt of Etel Adnan's *Shifting the Silence*

Wed, Nov. 9th:

WORKSHOP GROUP 2

GROUP 3 WORKSHOP MATERIALS DUE BY EMAIL MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 11/13

[Week 10: Ekphrasis]

Mon, Nov. 14th:

Readings due—

Poems by Rebecca Wolff, Kate Durbin, Frank O'Hara, Michael Leong, William Carlos Williams, W.H. Auden

Excerpts of Marcelline Delbecq's *Camera*

John Berger's "Go Ask the Time":

<https://granta.com/go-ask-the-time/>

Wed, Nov. 16:

WORKSHOP GROUP 3

[Week 11: Generative Exercises]

Mon, Nov. 21st:

Readings TBD—

In-class exploration of techniques such as Erasure, Cut-up, & False Translation

Wed, Nov 23rd:

NO CLASS SCHEDULED!

THANKSGIVING BREAK

[Week 12: Procedural Forms]

Mon, Nov. 28th:

Readings due—

Excerpt of Emily Pettit's *Goat in the Snow*

Excerpt of Ben Marcus' *The Age of Wire and String*

In-class portfolio preparation

Wed, Nov. 30th:

[Week 13: Wonder]

Mon, Dec. 5th:

Readings due—

Excerpts of Christopher Janke's *Structure of the Embryonic Rat Brain*

Excerpt of Madeline Gins' *WORD RAIN*

Wed, Dec. 7th:

Readings due—

Poems by Ted Dodson, Jorie Graham

In-class portfolio preparation

[Week 14: Change]

Mon, Dec. 12th:

Reading due—

Christian Schlegel's "Michigan"

<http://westbranch.blogs.bucknell.edu/files/2021/02/Christian-Schlegel.pdf>

In-class portfolio preparation

Wed, Dec. 14th:

LAST CLASS! / Portfolio Readings, Final Questions, Hanging Out, Gratitude

TUESDAY, DEC. 20TH — FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE BY MIDNIGHT IN MY INBOX