Introduction to Fiction and Poetry
CRWRI-UA.815.006
Fall 2023, T/Th 8 - 9:15 a.m.

Instructor: Christian Bodney (he/they)
Email: csb5898@nyu.edu
Office Hours: T / Th after class and by appointment

OBJECTIVE

This course is designed to introduce you to the writer’s life. Together we will read fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, engage in other multimedia’s like film and music, think critically about creativity, and develop new work that will reflect our individual artistic sensibilities.

STRUCTURE

The study and practice of creative writing are two different things. To achieve a balance between the two, we will divide our time evenly between craft classes (Tuesdays) and workshop classes (Thursdays.)

TUESDAYS

Will be devoted to the study of craft. We will discuss fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. The focus of our inquiries will be narrow but deep: how do these authors do what they do? what rules do they follow or break? how can we apply their techniques to our own writing?

THURSDAYS

Will be devoted to workshopping student work. The first half of the term will focus on poetry; the second half will focus on fiction/nonfiction. You will workshop two poems, and two fictions (or nonfictions): one being a flash piece (<1000 words) and one being a short piece (<3000 words.) It is vital to the success of these workshops that we establish a community of trust and respect. Please refer to the “Workshop Etiquette” handout for what to expect. In the last few minutes of class we will play around with writing generative exercises.

EXPECTATIONS

Participation and Attendance (20%)
- Class participation is expected. I will allow one excused absence during the semester, but after that, every missed class results in a grade deduction (e.g. “B+” becomes “B.”) If you are fifteen minutes late, it counts as a half-absence. After twenty minutes you are marked absent regardless of whether you show up or not.

Workshop Submissions and Feedback (30%)
- During the course of the semester you will workshop two poems (1 to 2 pages long) and two fiction pieces (one flash fiction piece under 800 words, and one short story that is less than 3000 words). Each workshop group will submit their pieces one week before they are to be
workshopped—typically on Thursdays. This means that everyone will have one week to sit and ruminate on each other’s work. Comments and critiques on your peers’ work should be generous and as extensive as possible. We will discuss workshop etiquette more in class.

Office Hours Consultation (20%)
- Schedule a meeting with me twice during the semester to discuss your writerly pursuits, or writing and reading in general, and to get to know you better. Additional appointments can always be made to discuss your work at any point during the semester.

Final Portfolio and Reading Journal (30%)
- Your final portfolio will consist of all of your original workshop drafts and the revised versions of those drafts. One new piece of work, whether it be a poem or a piece of fiction, should also be included. Extensive feedback will be provided.
- I want you to keep a journal where you document your experience with what I have assigned to read for the given week. This does not have to be a breakdown of what we read—rather, treat it as a place to capture your thoughts and observations on the world while doing these readings. More details to be provided in class.

Plagiarism

Don’t do it. Automatic fail.

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 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 (unless producing a work of nonfiction.) However, certain content 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 e.g. suicidal ideation, sexual assault, etc.

Tentative Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introductions, Syllabus, and Workshop Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 5 September</td>
<td>In class readings: “Why I Write” by Joan Didion, and handouts related to craft (prose and poetry) and theoretical terminology</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 1 poems due Sunday by midnight!</td>
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Week 2

Tuesday, 12 September
Poetry as an Introduction
Go over workshop etiquette

Thursday, 14 September
Workshop Group 1
Bring in critiques for Group 1

Group 2 poems due at midnight

Week 3

Tuesday, 19 September
Story: Events, Autonomy, and Structure
Readings due: by “Me and Miss Mandible” by Donald Barthelme, “Echo” by John Barth, and “In the Heart of the Heart of the Country” by William Gass
In class: The “Priest” They Called Him by Kurt Cobain and William S. Burroughs

Thursday, 21 September
Workshop Group 2
Bring in critiques for Group 2.

Group 3 poems due at midnight

Week 4

Tuesday, 26 September
Otherworldly Resistance!
Readings due: Brigit Pegeen Kelly’s Birdsong
In class reading and discussion of sestinas and villanelles: “One Art” by Elizabeth Bishop and “Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape” by John Ashberry

Thursday, 28 September
Workshop Group 3
Bring in critiques for Group 3

Group 1 poems due by midnight

Week 5

Tuesday, 3 October
Autofiction
Readings due: Edouard Leve’s Autoportrait
In class: An excerpt from Chris Kraus’s I Love Dick

Thursday, 5 October
Workshop Group 1
Bring in critiques for Group 1
Week 6
Tuesday, 10 October
The Ordeal of Being Alive!
Readings due: Louise Glück’s *The Wild Iris*

Thursday, 12 October
Workshop Group 2
Bring in critiques for Group 2

Week 7
Tuesday, 17 October
Love and Confession
Reading: *Simple Passion* by Annie Ernaux

Thursday, 19 October
Workshop Group 3
Bring in critiques for Group 3

Week 8
Tuesday, 24 October
From the Cento to the Erasure
Readings due: Nicole Sealey’s *Ordinary Beast*

Thursday, 26 October
XXX
Readings due: “Rape Fantasies” by Margaret Atwood, “Secretary” OR “Something Nice” by Mary Gaitskill, “The Summer After Barbara Claffey” by Christine Schutt
In class: The craft essay “Mind Fuck: Writing Better Sex” by Melissa Febos

Group 1 submit flash fiction by midnight

Week 9
Tuesday, 31 October
I’d Rather Be Human!
Readings due: Jack Gilbert’s *Refusing Heaven*

Thursday, 2 November
Workshop Group 1 flash fiction
Bring in critiques for Group 1 flash fiction

Group 2 flash fiction pieces due by midnight

Week 10
Tuesday, 7 November
How Uncanny!? OR “Action, Speech, Environment, Appearance”
Readings due: Samanta Schweblin’s *Fever Dream* OR “Death and the Compass” by Jorge Luis Borges, “The Third Tower” by Deborah Eisenberg, and “Honored Guest” by Joy Williams

Thursday, 9 November
Workshop Group 2 flash fiction
Bring in critiques for Group 2 flash fiction

Group 3 flash fiction pieces due by midnight
Week 11
Tuesday, 14 November
Oh wow, a play or a poem?
**Readings due:** *4.48 Psychosis* by Sarah Kane
Go over workshop etiquette

Thursday, 16 November
Workshop Group 3 flash fiction
Bring in critiques for Group 3 flash fiction
**All groups work on short stories**

Week 12
Tuesday, 21 November
Time Traveling with Grief, Loss, and Trauma
**Readings due:** Peter Handke’s *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams* and the short story “Recitatif” by Toni Morrison
**Both groups continue to work on short stories**

(Fall Break! No class)

Week 13
Tuesday, 28 November
Poetry as an Essay
**Readings due:** Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen*
**Short stories from both groups due Friday, 22 April by midnight**

Thursday, 30 November
Workshop Group 1 short stories (<3000 words)
Bring critiques for Group 1

Week 14
Tuesday, 5 November
**Readings due:**
In Class: an excerpt from *The Sarah Book* by Scott McClanahan, “Orientation” by Daniel Orozco’s, and “Suicidal Realism” by Brad Philips

Thursday, 7 December
Workshop Group 2 short stories (<3000 words)
Bring critiques for Group 2
**Begin to compile materials for the final portfolio**

Week 15
Tuesday, 12 December
Workshop Group 3 short stories (<3000 words)
Bring critiques for Group 3

Thursday, 14 December
Q and A with class: what have we learned?
**Discuss final portfolio / answer questions / wish you all well <3**

**Final Portfolios due on the 18th of December by midnight via email!**
(small note that the syllabus is subject to change)