

**Introduction to Prose and Poetry**  
*Section number:* CRWRI-UA.815.022  
*Time:* Mon & Wed, 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

*Instructor:* Rachel Stone  
*Email:* rs8147@nyu.edu  
*Office Hours:* by appointment

## **Course Overview**

This course has two primary objectives. The first is to allow each of you, as artists, to explore your craft. You will read widely and be exposed to many writers' voices. You might not connect with every writer we read here (and that's ok — not every writer is your teacher), but of those writers whose voices move you, this class will explore how they make their work, what tools and techniques they employ, and what traditions they're pulling from.

The second objective is for this class to be your writing community on campus. You may sit down to write alone, but your work is always in conversation with others. This class will be a laboratory for experimentation, where one is permitted to fall, fail, attempt, and revise. You all will have the privilege of getting to know one another through your writing, and will leave this class with a group of readers you trust.

## **Course Structure**

The course will be split into three main units: poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Our weeks will also be split, with our Monday sessions devoted to craft conversations, responding to the readings, and time for in-class writing, and our Wednesday sessions spent in workshop.

You will each be assigned one of three workshop groups, and will each workshop four pieces of writing throughout the course:

- Submission 1: poetry (1 - 3 pages)
- Submission 2: poetry (1 - 3 pages)
- Submission 3: fiction (3 - 12 pages, double-spaced)
- Submission 4: nonfiction (3 - 12 pages, double-spaced)

During our poetry unit, the class will read mostly contemporary works. The unit will take you through poetic forms and craft elements. In our fiction unit, we will read short stories. The unit will explore how writers use voice, play with readers' expectations, manipulate time, and build worlds. Finally, in our nonfiction unit, we will read a selection of essays, blogs, and criticism. This unit will take us into the writing world as one might encounter it off the page and outside the classroom, and work to define shifting and ephemeral styles of internet writing.

## **Electronics Policy**

You may use a computer to reference the readings or your notes in our Monday craft sections, but I ask that you take notes by hand as much as possible.

Laptops will not be permitted during Wednesday workshops (though of course please contact me if you require the use of a computer or tablet for accessibility reasons and we can work

something out). *Writers being workshopped each Wednesday must bring printed copies of their work for everyone in the class.*

## **Coursework and Grading**

### *Attendance and Participation: 30%*

In order for this class to become a community, everyone needs to be able to get to know — and trust — everyone else. Your participation is crucial; take each other seriously, and you'll be able to watch each other grow and change.

That said, sometimes trains are late, people get sick, and life intrudes. You're each allowed one excused absence throughout the semester. Beyond that, each missed class will lower your final grade by 5% (unless you are contagiously ill, test positive for COVID, or have a serious extenuating circumstance — please reach out to me, and we can figure something out).

I also understand that this is not the only class in your schedule. Try not to be late, but I'll understand if it happens. However, if you come to class 15+ minutes late more than three times in the semester, I'll start to take 1% off your grade for each late arrival. Feel free to bring coffee or breakfast to class if you need, and I'll probably do the same.

Finally, I ask that if you do choose to come to class and are recovering from a cold or starting to feel under the weather, that you please wear a mask. This is a personal request, so I will supply masks to anyone who needs or wants one. In addition, I welcome feedback or requests regarding any adjustments I can make to the classroom environment to make it more accessible.

### *Assignments: 20%*

For Monday's class:

1. **Craft homework assignment:** (*due via email Sunday evening at 5 p.m.*) After each Monday class, I will assign a short, themed prompt based on what we cover in class, so everyone can have a chance to experiment with each craft element. I won't be grading these based on how "good" they are — just that they are done. Feel free to use these for workshop if you'd like.

For Wednesday's workshop:

1. Be prepared to discuss and offer feedback on your peers' work. Come to each workshop with at least two comments for each person's piece: one moment where the piece was working particularly well, one place where you had a question or a suggestion. (For the first few weeks of workshop I will only ask for the first of two comments; after everyone gets a chance to see each others' writing styles and strengths, I will open the floor to suggestions).

### *Workshop Responsibilities: 25%*

Workshop pieces for Wednesday are due to me, via email, before the start of Monday's class. I will circulate your pieces over email so everyone has a chance to read over the work and prepare comments, but you're required to print out copies your pieces — one for everyone in the class, plus one for yourself — and hand them out during workshop on Wednesday.

*Outside Reading Attendance: 5%*

As much as I hope this course models a warm and collaborative community of readers, I want everyone to find their place in writing communities in the city. This assignment just requires you to attend one live reading, either in-person or over zoom. The Lillian Vernon Creative Writers' House hosts weekly events, but you can also choose to go to a reading at the Poetry Project, at KGB bar, at Unnameable Books, the Franklin Park Reading Series, Brooklyn Poets, the NYPL, or anywhere else you find. You don't have to stay in New York either; Upstairs at Abyssinia in Philadelphia hosts events, as does Dahlak Paradise. Write a short (no more than a page) reflection, and email it to me some time before our final class.

*Final Portfolio: 20%*

Writing is difficult, but now you've done it. Once you have words on the page, you can play with them, shift them around, or write something that follows a totally new direction. You're also not required to take advice from me, or suggestions from your peers. This final portfolio assignment just requires you send me each of your four workshop submissions, thoughtfully revised.

**Plagiarism**

Deliberate plagiarism will be reported to the department, without exception. If you are worried about meeting a deadline, please reach out to me.

**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>

If there is anything I can do to make this class more accessible to you, please reach out to me and I will do what I can.

**Workshop—Notes on Etiquette and Mutual Respect**

For the first three weeks of workshop, I will ask that everyone only provide their impressions of the piece of writing, and share what works well in everyone's work. I will then open the floor for

people to offer more prescriptive suggestions. Your goal should not be for people to sound more like you, but to help them sound like the best version of themselves. It's difficult to talk about writing, and it's difficult to share writing, so I ask that everyone approach each others' work with respect.

I'll hold the workshop in the same structure as the MFA program. The person being workshopped will save their comments until the class has spoken about the piece, after which I will ask the person being workshopped if they have any questions for the group.

## **On Student Wellness**

Unless I see explicit evidence that the speaker of a poem or story is the writer themselves, I will assume the speaker is fictional. However, certain content relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress – essentially, anything that seems to be a cry for help – will cause me concern. Please send me an email putting this work in context before submitting writing, especially for workshop, that could be interpreted this way.

## **Required Texts**

You won't be required to purchase any books this semester. I'll update all texts on Google Drive in advance of our craft classes. I'd recommend printing the readings and bringing them to class whenever possible.

## **An Overview of the Semester**

\* + ~ *Readings subject to change* ~ + \*

### **WEEK ONE**

*Monday, Jan 22: Why write?*

- "On Keeping a Notebook" by Joan Didion
- Craft talk "On Poetry" by Eileen Myles

*Wednesday, Jan 24*

- Mock workshop & discussion on workshop etiquette and expectations

### **WEEK TWO**

*Monday, Jan 29: Writing what we know; poems about "the self," memory and the mind*

- Poems by Niina Pollari, Molly Brodack, Sharon Olds, Larry Levis, Megan Fernandez, Madeleine Cravens, Ana Božičević

*Wednesday Jan 31*

- WORKSHOP GROUP ONE

### **WEEK THREE**

*Monday, Feb 5: Writing what we see; poems of place*

- Poems by Linda Gregg, David Berman, Alice Notley, Camille T. Dungy, Aria Aber

*Wednesday, Feb 7*

-WORKSHOP GROUP TWO

#### **WEEK FOUR**

*Monday, Feb 12: Form and its functions*

- Poems by Dianne Seuss, torrin a. greathouse, Jericho Brown, Terrance Hayes

*Wednesday, Feb 14*

-WORKSHOP GROUP THREE

#### **WEEK FIVE**

*Monday, Feb 19.*        **\*\* NO CLASS, PRESIDENTS' DAY\*\***

*Wednesday, Feb 21*

-WORKSHOP GROUP ONE

#### **WEEK SIX**

*Monday, Feb 26: Letting art in; ekphrasis and influence*

- Poems by Ama Codjoe, Victoria Chang, Kevin Young, Hannah Srajer

*Wednesday, Feb 28*

- WORKSHOP GROUP TWO

#### **WEEK SEVEN**

*Monday, March 4: Language as rebellion*

- Poems by Solmaz Sharif, Monica Youn, Terrance Hayes, Franny Choi, Maha Ahmed

*Wednesday, March 6*

-WORKSHOP GROUP THREE

#### **WEEK EIGHT**

*Monday, March 11: Voice as character (fiction unit begins!)*

- Short stories by Otessa Moshfegh, George Saunders, Andrew Martin

*Wednesday, March 13*

-WORKSHOP GROUP ONE

**\*\*NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK\*\***

**WEEK NINE**

*Monday, March 25: Building a world*

- Short stories by Lucia Berlin, C.V. Watkins, Isabelle Allende

*Wednesday, March 27*

-WORKSHOP GROUP TWO

**WEEK TEN**

*Monday, April 1: Pace, time and surprise*

- Stories by Alice Munro, Carmen Maria Machado

*Wednesday, April 3*

-WORKSHOP GROUP THREE

**WEEK ELEVEN**

*Monday, April 8: What was the personal essay?*

- Pieces by Alexandra Molotkow, Vauhini Vara, click around Web Safe 2k16

*Wednesday, April 10*

-WORKSHOP GROUP ONE

**WEEK TWELVE**

*Monday, April 15: Criticism is dead; where essays become art*

- Reviews by Harmony Holiday, Sarah Nicole Prickett

*Wednesday, April 17*

-WORKSHOP GROUP TWO

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

*Monday, April 22: Performance! A return to poetry*

- Videos and poems by Patricia Smith, Danez Smith, Jamila Woods and Nate Marshall, pieces on Green Mill in Chicago and KGB Bar

*Wednesday, April 24*

-WORKSHOP GROUP THREE

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

*Monday, April 29: The future (how to keep a practice)*

- “Poetry and Collaboration” article, talk about the readings we saw

*Wednesday, May 1*

-In lieu of workshop, bring the piece you are most proud of writing this semester.

**WEEK FIFTEEN**

*Monday, May 6: Last class! Party*