

Introduction to Poetry and Prose

Spring 2024

Instructor: Sophie van Well Groeneveld

Class Time: Mon. & Wed. 8:00-9:15am

Course Number: CRWRI-UA 815 003

Location: Room LL01, Academic Resource Center, 18 Washington Pl

Email: svg253@nyu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Objectives

This course will take an international focus towards studying prose and poetry; we will look at a variety of literary traditions to enable us to have an understanding of a pool of literary modes, styles, textures and traditions to inform us, and move us as we approach our own writing. We will learn and discuss how to use these modes or subvert them towards accessing truth in writing, writing sensorially and hybrid writing that blurs notions of genres.

The first part of the semester will look at writing subjects: family, objects, places, 'home'. The second part of the semester will focus on styles, textures, modes: 'persona' driven work, writing in second and third persons, apositallary writing, and writing with hybridity.

A selection of authors whose work we will engage with across the duration of the semester are: Fernanda Melchor, Annie Ernaux, Ocean Vuong, Jamaica Kincaid, Tariq Ali, Lola Olufemi, Etel Adnan, Natalia Ginzburg, Romain Gary, Kirsty Bell, Jhumpa Lahiri, Warsan Shire and Anne Carson.

The course will be structured with our Monday class for readings, presentations and in class writing exercises. Our workshop will take place on Wednesday.

Structure

Monday 8am - Craft Class

We will discuss weekly readings of their craft, form, genre, subject. Each week a student will present a short introduction on the readings. We will also complete in-class writing exercises.

Wednesday 8am - Workshop

In the workshop each week we will discuss classmates' submissions (every student will have their own work read.)

Requirements

Readings: All readings will be available on BrightSpace prior to the class. We will read one text in its entirety during the semester. You are encouraged to purchase your own copies of this text, but can also request them from your local libraries or Bobst.

Preparation for class: For workshop you will bring printed out copies of your work for the class the week before your writing is workshopped.

Students will bring weekly written thoughts on the week's readings, these must be emailed to me prior to class.

Presentation: Each student will present once on the week's readings. The presentation schedule will be confirmed along with the workshop schedule in our first class.

Writing: Students will workshop 3 times across the semester.

Since we will be reading many texts across the semester that tread the lines of fiction and nonfiction such as autofiction and the nonfiction novel, prose submissions are open in genre. We will discuss this in further detail in our first class.

1 prose

3 poems

3 poems / 1 lyric poem / prose /hybrid

You will submit the week before you are Workshopped. You must bring printed out copies of your work, double-spaced, for the whole class, including me.

Workshop guidelines

Reading closely is an act of generosity. Please read the words on the page with great care. Response letters should have the aim of helping the writer realise the truest potential of their writing, towards a piece that is more precise, sharp and alive. Please print one copy of your letter.

Together in this course, we are making a creative community together. This requires sharing your writing with each other, outloud and on the page, and celebrating each other's work. This course is designed to strengthen our community as a class, to grow us as readers of literary texts, and of each others' writings, to learn how to support each other's work, and to uplift one another as writers.

Technology: Electronic devices are allowed for viewing readings in our Monday class. Their use should be kept to a minimum, working off of printouts across the semester where possible. You will bring printouts of your writing for workshop to class. If you have accessibility needs, please speak to me. Any student using a handheld device in class will be at risk of having their participation grade impacted.

Coursework and Grading

Attendance and Class Participation 20% : You're expected to read with care and to come to every class with observations and questions, and come ready to respond to your colleagues' contributions, too.

Course Attendance and Policies: You are required to attend all classes unless you are unable to do so for a serious reason. If you are ten minutes late to a class, counts as an unexcused absence. Two unexcused absences will count as a full absence. More than two absences will affect your grade.

Reading responses and presentation 20%: Every week you will write a brief one page response to the week's readings. You will email me your responses to the reading journals twice during the semester. While these are not submitted weekly, I expect you to come to class with questions and responses, ready to discuss the readings. This is to help you practice observing what moves you in a piece of writing, what makes you tick and what your own responses are to the writing.

Writing submissions 30%: You will submit three original pieces over the course of the semester. This will include one piece of prose, one set of poems, and a third piece of your choosing.

Final Portfolio 30%: You will submit a final portfolio of all writing assignments we did in class, your three originally submitted pieces, and a revised version of each piece.

Office Hours: I would like each person to meet with me during office hours at least once during the semester. Send me an email at svg253@nyu.edu to secure an appointment time.

Support: Any student who is struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility at 212 998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline at 212 443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals.

Plagiarism of any kind is against NYU's academic integrity policy.

Provisional Syllabus

Spring 2024

Week 1: Introduction

Monday 22/1

Introduction: syllabus review, set workshop schedule, discuss critique letters

In class reading: excerpt from Fernando Pessoa's on the book not written, poem 'Advice for Writers' - Abdellatid Laâbi

In class exercise: short writing exercise

Wednesday 14/1

Introduction part II: We will set guidelines for students inclass presentation on weekly readings and discuss the reading journals

Assignment: each student will bring in a piece of literature they like to class and present on what moves them about the piece.

In class exercise: short writing exercise in preparation for first workshop submissions

Week 2: The 'persona', on writing driven by voice

Monday 29/1

Readings: Excerpts from 'Family Lexicon' Natalia Ginzburg, 'Girl' Jamaica Kincaid, and excerpts from 'The Life Before Us' Romain Gary

In class exercise: writing in response to the week's readings, a short piece where you write a voice driven, persona text

Wednesday 31/1

workshop

Week 3: Sensory details, sensation, sensuality

Monday 2/5

Readings: Excerpts from 'Shadows Beneath the Pomegranate Tree' Tariq Ali, writings on sensuality by bell hooks and Adrienne Rich, poem 'Blue Vase' by Cynthia Zarin

In class exercise: writing sensorally on a subject or object

Wednesday 2/7

workshop

Week 4: Writing on objects, artefacts, the 'tour guide' as a mode and style

Monday 2/12

Readings: 'Seeing Beyond The Beauty of a Vermeer' Teju Cole, excerpts from 'The Scent of Flowers at Night' - Leïla Slimani

In class exercise: Writing on an object, exhibition, or tour of a place

Wednesday 2/14

workshop

Week 5: Workshop

Monday 2/19 NO CLASS (Presidents' Day)

Wednesday 2/21

workshop

Week 6: Writing on Place part 1

Monday 2/26

Readings: excerpts of 'This is Not Miami' Fernanda Melchor, introduction to the genre of 'cronicas', excerpts from 'Of Cities and Women' Etel Adnan

In class: We will watch part of Jocelyn Saab's part II of 'The Beirut Trilogy'

Wednesday 2/28

workshop

Week 7: Writing on Place part 2

Monday 3/04

Readings: 'A Small Place' Jamaica Kincaid, excerpts from 'No Name in the Street' James Baldwin and poems by James Baldwin, poems by Warsan Shire

Watch: excerpts from 'Of Another Place' documentary of James Baldwin's time in Istanbul

Wednesday 3/06

workshop

Week 8: Writing on Place: part 3

Monday 3/11

Readings: 'Winter in the Abruzzi' essay Natalia Ginzburg, short story 'A Temporary Matter' Jhumpa Lahiri, poem 'Summer' by Cynthia Zarin,

Wed 3/13

Workshop

Week 9

Monday 3/18 **NO CLASS (Spring Break)**

Wednesday 3/20 **NO CLASS (Spring Break)**

Week 9: CONFIRM

Mon 3/25

Readings: excerpts from 'Glass, Irony and God' Anne Carson.
'Citizen' Claudia Rankine

Wednesday 3/27:

workshop

Week 10: POV

Monday 4/01

Readings: excerpts of 'Open Water' Caleb Azumah Nelson, first half of Annie Ernaux's 'A Girl's Story', excerpt from 'Things' George Perec

In class: writing exercise focusing on pov

Wednesday 4/03

workshop

Week 11: Accessing a truth

Monday 4/08

Readings: rest of 'A Girl's Story' Annie Ernaux, poems by Ocean Vuong

Wednesday 4/10

REMOTE CLASS / *workshop*

Week 12: Accessing a truth; hybridity

Monday 4/15

Readings: poems from 'Experiments in Imagining Otherwise' Lola Olufemi, excerpts from 'Time is a Mother' Ocean Vuong, excerpts from 'A Seventh Man' John Berger, poems by Grace Paley

Wednesday 4/17

workshop

Week 13: Interiority and Exteriority

Monday 4/22

Readings: excerpts from 'The Undercurrents' Kirsty Bell, poems by Jean Valentine

Wednesday 4/24

workshop

Week 14: Style

Monday 4/29

Readings: poems from 'Soap' Francis Ponge, excerpts from 'Essayism' Brian Dillon and 'On Being Blue' William Gass

Wednesday 5/1

workshop

Week 15: Epistolary Writing

Monday 5/6

Readings: remainder of 'Of Cities and Women' Etel Adnan, excerpts from 'Experiments in Imagining Otherwise' Lola Olufemi

Round up discussion on th semester.