

Creative Writing: Intro to Prose & Poetry

Course Number: CRWRI-UA.815.018; Section: 7555

Dates/Time: MW 9:30-10:45 AM

Instructor: Genevieve Shubeck

E-mail: maetavee@nyu.edu

Location: 18 Washington Pl (ARC) Room LL03; Washington Square

Office hours: after class or by appointment

Objective

Eliot said of Milton that a “man may be a great artist, and yet have a bad influence.” We will be looking at writers who are by and large good artists and trying to see what might make them good influences as well.

Required Text: [*The Zoo of the New*](#) (Penguin, 2017), edited by Don Paterson and Nick Laird. E-books are not permitted.

All prose readings will be provided by me via binder. I will pass these out on the first day of class. If you are absent or add the class late, please email me, and I will provide a copy. **Do not lose this.** If you lose it, you are responsible for re-printing. Readings will also be available online [here](#), but please bring your binder to class. Prose readings will include an expanse of writers, ranging from the classic to the experimental.

I also recommend you obtain a good dictionary and style manual. This is not a requirement, and I will not be checking. I suggest the [*New Oxford American Dictionary, Third Edition*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Logistics

We will divide our time evenly between workshops (Mondays) and craft classes (Wednesdays).

Mondays will be devoted to workshopping student work. We will alternate between poetry and prose, although we may read both throughout the week.

Wednesdays will be discussion days for poetry and prose drawn from the textbook and other assigned readings. We will look at a variety of work by writers inside and outside the traditional canon. My goal is for these discussions to be expansive and specific. I want to know which pieces you like, which you don't, and together we will figure out *why*. What you dislike can be just as important to you as a writer as what you do like...

There will be no open screens permitted in this class. Please print your materials and bring a notebook and pen.

Assignments

You will turn in a piece of writing every week, submitted to me by noon on Sunday via Brightspace. Some weeks will be poems, others prose. From the pieces submitted, I'll choose six as the worksheet for our discussion to which the workshop will be devoted. Over the course of the semester, each writer will be workshopped approximately six times.

You must bring two paper copies of your assignment to class. One is for me, and the other is for you. You are also responsible for printing the assignments of your workshop peers and providing written feedback by the next Monday.

On weeks we are workshopping poetry, you must also write out, by hand, a poem (at least 14 lines) from the textbook. When we workshop prose, please write out, by hand, a section (at least 5 sentences) from the assigned reading. You will turn this in when you turn in your typed poem or story.

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a final portfolio of minimum 8 pieces of writing. Please compile your selections, title the collection, and include the selected works' drafts at the end. We'll discuss what these portfolios should look like briefly on the first day, and at length closer to the end of the semester.

Finally, I expect you to memorize a poem of your choice and recite it for the class. We will have a class dedicated to the recitations. The poem **must** be sourced from the textbook, the Poetry Foundation, or The Academy of American Poets, and be a minimum of fourteen lines.

Rules of presentation

1. Title your pieces.
2. For poems, single space with 12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial. Don't use a clever font. For prose, double space with 12-point Times New Roman **only**.
3. Don't center justify. (It makes writing look like a Hallmark card.) For similar reasons, don't right-justify, either.
4. Put your name, class, my name, and the assignment number in the upper-right corner of the page.
5. You must use correct English grammar and punctuation. I will mark all errors and ask you to write a paragraph that gives the correct rule and form.

Rules of composition

1. Stay away from abstraction until you can handle detail.
2. Stay away from passive voice and sentence fragments until you can handle sentences.
Stay away from dialogue until you can handle exposition.
3. Learn the rules of punctuation. Learn verb tenses. Learn how to use a participle.
4. Learn the difference between “like” and “as.”
5. No rhyming, unless the prompt demands it.
6. Write only in complete sentences.

Please **bring 13 copies of a poem** (minimum 14 lines, maximum 28), written by an established poet, and published before the year of your birth, **to the first class**.

Weekly expectations:

Sunday, by noon: Poetry or prose assignment due on Brightspace.

Monday: Two hard copies of assignment due; handwritten poem or paragraph from textbook or assigned reading due; paragraphs on grammar errors (if noted in my feedback) due; written feedback for peers from previous workshop due.

Wednesday: Come prepared for class discussion (i.e.: binder, textbook, notebook and pen).

Schedule

Jan 22 - Introduction to course; discussion of metrics, cliché, feeling; in-class reading (Joan Didion “On Self-Respect”); **remember to bring 13 copies of a previously published poem for the first day, Monday January 22!!!**

Jan 24 - Discussion; workshop etiquette overview

Jan 29 - Workshop Prompt 1

Jan 31 - Discussion

Feb 5 - Workshop Prompt 2

Feb 7 - Discussion

Feb 12 - Workshop Prompt 3

Feb 14 - Discussion

Feb 19 - NO CLASS

Feb 21 - Workshop Prompt 4/Discussion

Feb 26 - Workshop Prompt 5
Feb 28 - Discussion

Mar 4 - Workshop Prompt 6
Mar 6 - Discussion

Mar 11 - Workshop Prompt 7
Mar 13 - Discussion

Mar 18 - SPRING BREAK
Mar 20 - SPRING BREAK

Mar 25 - Workshop Prompt 8
Mar 27 - Discussion

April 1 - Workshop Prompt 9
April 3 - Discussion

April 8 - Workshop Prompt 10
April 10 - Discussion

April 15 - Workshop Prompt 11
April 17 - Discussion

April 22 - Workshop Prompt 12
April 24 - Recitations

April 29 - Workshop last revisions
May 1 - Discussion

May 6 - Turn in portfolio

Grading

Your final grade will consist of 50% presence and participation, 25% weekly assignments, 15% final portfolio of at least 8 pieces, and 10% proof of drafts (I want to see that you worked on more than one draft during the semester). Portfolios will be graded on imaginative promise in terms of subject matter or style, taking into account the courage and creativity shown in the assignment, as well as the technical dexterity or ingenuity, and, in addition, the quality of the revision. For revisions, it is about their impact, not the number of changes—that is, if you change

one word and it vastly improves the work, that is sufficient. *(Please note that this probably will not be the case!)* What I'm looking for is the thought you've put into your revisions.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You may have two absences for any reason but you must notify me **in advance**. Each unnotified absence and each absence beyond those permitted will result in loss of half a letter grade for the term. Lateness over ten minutes is equivalent to half an absence. If you are absent on workshop day, you will not be workshopped!

Plagiarism

There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism.

Use of AI to write your poem, may it be ChatGPT or some new thing I am too old and out-of-touch to have heard of, is considered cheating.

Student Wellness

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.

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>

This Be The Verse

by Phillip Larkin

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
 They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
 And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn
 By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were sippy-stern
 And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.
 It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
 And don't have any kids yourself.

“Knowing when to stop is what makes a good piece of writing.” Anne Carson

[you fit into me]

by Margaret Atwood

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye

The doll's alphabet

by Camilla Grudova

The Doll's Alphabet has eleven letters:

A B C D I L M N O P U

Digging

by Seamus Heaney

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pin rest; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.