How to Write (Amongst Other Things)
Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry & Fiction
Tuesday & Thursday 8am-9:15am
Bobst Room 836

Instructor: Bea Bacon, bsb9382@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 1-3, Thursday 1-3

Course Objectives:

Primarily, this class will aim to explore the craft of writing through discussion, a wide range of readings from many genres and through workshopping your own work with your peers. Amongst other things, you will also learn how to see, how to reflect, how to be a helpful critic, how to read and how to talk about the wonderful, neverending world of words. Through our weekly readings and discussion of texts, you will develop a critical lens and become familiar with a wide ranging selection of craft aspects that you will then use in your own writing. I hope, by the end of the semester, you will not only have a greater grasp on writing, but you will also have a greater grasp on seeing and communicating with the world in front of you through this expansive art.

About me: I am a writer and poet from Bristol, United Kingdom and I have lived in NYC for 2 years. I tend to write conversational works and I touch on themes such as spaces, gender, humor and our own interior worlds. My passion for writing knows no bounds and, in light of this, I am so excited to be teaching this class.

GRADING

Attendance (20%)

Attendance from all peers is fundamental to building our class environment. In light of this, attendance is mandatory. You are allowed TWO unexcused absences. If you go beyond this, I will be in contact with you via email. If you are unwell or you have a personal reason why you cannot make it to class, please make sure to email me before class. Additionally, this class is an early one! I will be bringing my coffee and perhaps a bit of breakfast. You are more than welcome to do so too.

Participation (30%)

It is my belief that you learn the most about writing when you talk about it, and, even more so, when you talk about it with other people. This may be one of the only times in your life where you are part of a regular circle of writers and their many ideas so use this time wisely and contribute to this community. I invite you to be an active communicator and listener. Craft classes (held on Tuesdays) will invite you to discuss the text we are reading that week, to ask questions, share your first impulsive thoughts, to talk through textual analysis. During these classes, I will lead discussions about key craft elements in the texts we are reading. In workshop classes (held on Thursdays), you will be required to either offer constructive
feedback to your peers on their work, or share your own writing. In my class, questions, misunderstandings, and confusion around a text is where we learn the most.

Assignments (30%)

**Workshops:** If you are being workshopped, you must submit your piece by SUNDAY EVENING (No later than 8PM) at the latest. This gives us all enough time to read and think about your work before we come to the workshop class on Thursday. You will be uploading your work to our Brightspace page for review. Including full workshops, you will share work with the class approximately 6-7 times over the semester. This gives us plenty of to read and become accustomed to your writing style,

Full workshops will allow around 10 minutes for each person, separate group workshops will have around 20 minutes to read and receive feedback. You must turn in at least one piece of fiction/nonfiction and poetry for a workshop during the semester. Poems should not exceed 3 pages and for fiction pieces/nonfiction pieces, please do not exceed 7 pages (double spaced). If you are considering turning in fiction for our full workshops, please consider submitting something under 7 pages.

**Workshop Responses:** If you are not being workshopped that week, you are responding to the pieces that have been submitted. In Brightspace, you will respond to the pieces for that week by offering a short 100-200 word response. These can be in short form note format, or in a letter style. We will use these notes to ignite our conversations during workshops. **Please submit responses by WEDNESDAY NOON at the latest.**

**Readings:** In short, read the readings. Some of them you may not like, which is a valid conversation starter in class. Some of them might become your new favorites! I also hope that you will find the readings manageable. Many moons ago, I took a Victorian Literature seminar and our professor told us all that if you did not read the text and still came to class, you were in fact “a parasite” feeding off of other people’s ideas. Whilst I thought this was rather strongly worded, I see the sentiment. Do not be a parasite! Be the food!

**Bring in a Bit:** Each class someone will read a short poem or piece of writing to start the class off (no more than 3 minutes). This is entirely up to you and allows us to continually hear work we may have not heard of before. **Please sign up here for reading slots.**

**Podcast Episode:** Please see Class Schedule for more information.

**Final Portfolio 20%:**

On the last day of class, you will submit five to ten pieces of work that you have been working on over the semester. This portfolio will also include a section of revision notes for each of the works that you submit showing me how you have revised the pieces and how they have developed over the semester.
OTHER VERY IMPORTANT THINGS:

Workshop Etiquette: By sharing work in this class, you are doing a very bold thing indeed. You have made the choice to submit your work to be evaluated by the instructor and a group of peers. Therefore, you have entered into a contract whereby you have agreed to listen, in an open-minded way, to the responses of others. In light of this, I ask that all who participate in this workshop refrain from any personal comments towards whoever is sharing work. Workshop feedback should be constructive in nature and should aid the direction of a work for further development.

Office Hours: You are required to meet with me at least once during this semester. Please note that this is where you will receive my extensive feedback on your work. Make sure to also bring along any questions, concerns, or even if you just want to talk about a novel or collection you’ve been loving, I’d be happy to chat with you.

Plagiarism: There is a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. Additionally, please do not recycle work that you have completed for another class.

Student Wellness: Unless we see explicit evidence in a 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 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.

Electronic Policy: You are welcome to use your laptop for reading and note taking purposes only. Devices should never hinder class participation.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Books to purchase are in **BOLD**. Deadlines are in **RED**.

**INTRODUCTIONS**
**Tuesday 1/24:** Introduction to Course/Workshop Expectations & Etiquette in light of our full workshop.
**Thursday 1/26:** Full Workshop.

**SAY HELLO TO THE WHY**
**Tuesday 1/31:** Eileen Myles, *For Now: Why I Write* (Yale University Press, 2020), Joan Didion, “On Keeping a Notebook” (Brightspace)
**Thursday 2/2:** Workshop

**KNOW YOUR STYLE**
**Thursday 2/9:** Workshop

**WRITE ABOUT LOVE**
**Tuesday 2/14:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” James Schuyler, “Steaming Ties” and “This Dark Apartment,” Yu Xiehua “Crossing Half of China to Sleep with You,” Carl Phillips, “Just The Wind for a Sound, Softly” and Raymond Carver’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” (All texts on Brightspace).
**Thursday 2/16:** Workshop

**USE FORM WISELY AND UNWISELY**
**Tuesday 2/21** William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130, Terrence Hayes, “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin” [“I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison”], Patricia Smith “Ghazal” from *Blood Dazzler*, Sam Sax, “Prediagnosis,” Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night.” (Brightspace)
**Thursday 2/23:** Workshop

**UNDERSTANDING IMAGE**
**Thursday 3/2:** Workshop

**USE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**
**Thursday 3/9 Workshop**

**SPRING BREAK (LONG READS PODCAST EPISODE):** You will have a choice to read from any of these following novels and/or long form poems (TBD). If you would like to read something that is not on
this list, please let me know. Whilst reading or after reading your chosen text, you will be required to make a podcast episode (15-20 minutes), either about your personal reading experience OR about the text itself and your personal review. Get creative. You could even interview one of the characters from your text. You could do a performative reading of your text. Please include music, and even get your peers involved to do collaborative episodes. Do not fear, I will be offering some guidance on how to edit and record something like this. **Podcasts are due on Monday 3/20 by noon.**

**CONSUME LONG THINGS**
*Tuesday 3/21* Long Reads Podcast Listening Party/Text Discussion
*Thursday 3/23*: Workshop

**USE SOUND, PATTERNS AND REPEAT YOURSELF**
*Tuesday 3/28* Haryette Mullen, *Sleeping With The Dictionary* (Selected Poems on Brightspace), Brenda Shaughnessy, “Artless,” Sam Sax, “Lisp” (Brightspace)
*Thursday 3/30*: Workshop

**WRITE ABOUT PLACES AND SPACES AND ROOMS PART ONE**
*Tuesday 4/4* Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Selected Pages on Brightspace), **James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room.**
*Thursday 4/6* Workshop

**WRITE ABOUT PLACES AND SPACES AND ROOMS PART TWO**
*Thursday 4/13* Workshop

**LISTEN TO MUSIC**
*Tuesday 4/18* Lauryn Hill, *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, Big Thief, *Dragon New Warm Mountain I Believe In You*, Dry Cleaning, *New Long Leg.* (All available on Apple Music or Spotify, Other platforms are available.)
*Thursday 4/20* Workshop

**WRITE BY NUMBERS**
*Tuesday 4/25*, Hannah Sullivan, *Three Poems* (Selection on Brightspace) and **Maggie Nelson, Bluets**
*Thursday 4/27* Workshop

**Tuesday 5/2** Generative Writing Session
*Thursday 5/4* Full Workshop
*(PORTFOLIOS DUE BY THE END OF THE DAY)*