Creative Writing: Introduction to Prose & Poetry — CRWRI - UA 815.017

Instructor: Nina Ferraz (she/her/hers)  
Time: Mon/Wed 11:00am-12:15pm  
Location: BOBS 836  
Office Hours: by appointment

SYLLABUS (provisional)

“Creativity is intelligence having fun!”
Albert Einstein

“Just get it down on paper, and then we'll see what to do with it.”
Maxwell Perkins

"Writing is like driving at night. You can see only as far as the headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.”
E. L. Doctorow

This course is an introduction to the craft of writing and the art of close-reading. It is divided into craft classes and workshop classes, and is designed for undergraduates. Our main goal is to help you to explore some of the many ways you can think analytically, critically and strategically about your texts (and the texts of others) - and help you organize and articulate these thoughts.

Part 1: CRAFT CLASSES

We will read a tailor-made selection of texts (poems, fiction and nonfiction) by major authors from all time (see reading list below). We will dissect them with an eye for form, for how these texts were built and the choices the authors made to create their work.

➔ We will read 4 to 10 poems or 2 to 3 pieces of prose (short stories, essays, excerpts…) each week  
➔ Don’t worry about buying anything for this class  
➔ Come to class prepared for discussion

CRAFT HOMEWORK / HW discussion

➔ The due readings, guiding questions, and assignments will be emailed to you (or posted on Brightspace) one week before the due date  
➔ Word count: 100 to 300 words  
➔ Goal - practice reading critically, identifying craft points and taking a personal stance on what you read
WORKSHOP SUBMISSION
Each student will submit their creative work for our group to read it. The following week you are the main guest in class - it is when your text will be workshopped.

- each student will be able to submit 3 times (you’ll have to submit twice, on your 3rd slot you can resubmit - you choose)
- Word limit: 1 to 5 poems /// up to 3 to 4 pages of prose (TNR, 12, 1.5 space)
  Do not feel any pressure to write to the word limit, short work can be just as powerful
- Genres: Throughout the semester you can focus on your genre of preference, but try for at least one text of poetry and 2 of prose (fiction and CNF)
- Go the extra mile: these submissions can be the start of your next book!

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK (and IN-CLASS ETIQUETTE)
IN CLASS
Please come to class prepared for a vivid, respectful and positive discussion on how to help the authors in their intentions for the text.

IN WRITING
We will also practice giving written feedback. What kinds of feedback there are? What are the most important things to consider when commenting and suggesting edit changes? (If you want, we can provide a feedback letter template to guide you).

Remember: Be nice!
Always try to identify the author’s intent.
Narrators vs Characters vs Classmates - don’t confuse them.
Avoid saying: this is good x this is bad (say: working / not working).
Avoid being merely descriptive.

Part 3: FINAL PROJECT

- We will work, as a group, to find a class project (details in class). If you have something in mind, we can also discuss a personal project. But these projects need to be discussed individually and approved by me. The default option for our final project is an individual portfolio.
Anatomy of your individual portfolio:

➢ Front cover: get a design and a name for your portfolio (get creative) Include your name & date
➢ Table of contents (mind the structure of your portfolio, consider separating poems, short stories, and responses)
➢ Write an introduction - a personal overview of the contents, a self-reflection about what you have learned through the readings and activities (2 to 5 pages)
➢ Body: Craft: include all your work. Workshop: include all critiques (your feedback letters to other students) and your revised pieces (your own poems, essays, stories).
   Arrange each section in chronological order. You should be able to see your evolution— not that the later works should be better than the ones written in the beginning of the course, but that they should show a more mindful use of craft tools (when (re)writing) and a better command of jargon (when commenting about a text).
➢ Back cover - your photo, a pitch (or summary), quotes from your classmates (you can include mock quotes and praises from journals, magazines)

Goal - have a tangible representation of your writing and your reflections on writing. You should be able to see the things you’ve learned and how you’ve improved (your own learning curve).

Part 4: GRADING

1. Attendance (& Participation) — 40 points
   This class is discussion-based and so attendance is very important. Students should arrive on time, and be ready for discussion. All students are allowed one unexcused absence, but all absences beyond that will drop your letter grade by a third. If you are more than 15 minutes late, that will count as an unexcused absence.

2. Assignments - 30 points
   (Workshop submissions and feedbacks, Craft weekly readings and responses)
   You won’t be evaluated by your talent or per word count, but for commitment and hard work. A carefully written and well revised submission will have a huge impact on the quality of discussions. Reading the assignments and preparing responses for the readings will also have a substantial impact on the overall depth of the comments. Your work will be assessed in conjunction with your participation.

3. Final Project (Revised Portfolio) — 30 points
   Your portfolio can be the start of your new personal project. (For details, see Part 3 above).

   Remember: If you apply yourself to little things you will do great things.

   ➔ Extra credit - If needed, talk to me about how to get extra credits. You can attend a literary event, museum or gallery exhibition or music concert and write a review of it (1-2 pages). We can also talk about a personal project. Your grade will be bumped up half a mark. But those options also need to be discussed individually and approved by me.
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Part 5: Selected READINGS

1. Sonnet 12, by William Shakespeare
2. Bluebird, by Charles Bukowski
3. Léxi/Lximo, by Augusto de Campos
4. Silencio, by Eugen Gomringer
5. Apfel, by Reinhard Dohl
6. Red Delicious, by Jerome Murphy
7. Venus Anadyomene, by Arthur Rimbaud
8. Leda and the Swan, by W.B. Yeats
9. The World Is Too Much With Us, by William Wordsworth
10. She Walks in Beauty, by Lord Byron
11. The Rose of Hiroshima, by Vinicius de Morares
12. ‘Out, Out—’ by Robert Frost (content alert)
13. Fanatismo (Fanaticism), by Florbela Espanca
14. José, by Carlos Drummond de Andrade
15. Funeral de um Lavrador (A Peasant’s Funeral), by João Cabral de Melo Neto
16. Phenomenal Woman, by Maya Angelou
17. Mirror, by Sylvia Plath
18. I’m “wife” – I’ve finished that, by Emily Dickinson
19. Her Kind, by Anne Sexton
20. The Parakeets, by Alberto Blanco
21. The Black Snake, by Mary Jane Oliver
22. Untitled, by Ernest Hemingway
23. The Dinosaur, by Augusto Monterroso
24. The Mice, by Lydia Davis
25. The Stowaway, by Julian Barnes
26. Midnight Mass, by Machado de Assis
27. How to Be a Bigwig, by Machado de Assis
28. In the Ice Region, by Joyce Carol Oates
29. Emma Zenns, by Jorge Luis Borges
30. The Body, by Clarice Lispector
31. The Aleph, by Jorge Luis Borges
32. Love, by Clarice Lispector
33. The Animals, by Michel Laub
34. Rothschild’s Fiddle, by Antón Chekhov
35. Night Drive, by Rubem Fonseca
36. Chronicle: “The Case Against the Trauma Plot” The New Yorker, by Parul Sehgal
38. Theorphrastus’ Characters: an ancient take on bad behavior
39. The Female Body, by Margaret Atwood
40. Half a Life, by Darin Strauss (Excerpt)
41. In Cold Blood, by Truman Capote (Excerpt)
42. The Sense of an Ending, by Julian Barnes (Excerpt)
43. Chronicles of a Death Foretold, by Gabriel García Márquez (Excerpt)
44. Jazz, by Toni Morrison (Excerpt)
45. Carpathia, by Jesse Lee Kercheval
46. Art as a Technique, by Viktor Shklovsky
47. The Philosophy of Composition, by Edgar Allan Poe
48. Theses on the Short Story, by Ricardo Piglia
49. Some Aspects of the Short Story, by Julio Cortázar
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Suggested readings:
- Bird by Bird, by Anne Lamott
- On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, by Stephen King
- Pity the Reader: On Writing with Style, by Kurt Vonnegut and Suzanne McConnell

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**Part 6: SEMESTER SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY # 1 -- Jan 23</th>
<th></th>
<th>Notes: attendance, content alert (readings and submissions) and in-class writing assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions, Syllabus, Expectations, Students info / CW survey / Building a group / WS: group assignments and schedule</td>
<td>In-Class Extra: <strong>Craft elements as tools</strong> (Caetano and Madox Brown)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY # 2 -- Jan 25</th>
<th></th>
<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Symbols, Motifs, Intertextuality, Influence</strong> (Annunciation Paintings)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art as a technique, Sound as a craft element, Art as thinking in images</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 3 -- Jan 30</th>
<th></th>
<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Allegories</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to approach a poem (inspired by Matthew Rohrer)</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 4 -- Feb 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Other allegories</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poe’s idea of “effect”</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 5 -- Feb 6</th>
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<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Collage Poem</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to approach an idea - show and tell and share and howl</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 6 -- Feb 8</th>
<th></th>
<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Short short</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Piglia’s idea of “secret story”</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 7 -- Feb 13</th>
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<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Structure</strong> (inspired by Hannah Tinti)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Endings</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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<tr>
<th>DAY # 8 -- Feb 15</th>
<th></th>
<th>In-Class Extra: <strong>Beginnings</strong> (inspired by Hannah Tinti)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cortazar’s concept of “knock-out”</td>
<td>In-Class Writing</td>
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→ Monday Feb 20 - Presidents’ Day
DAY # 9  - - Feb 22

The devil is in the details: Objects, events and symbols in short stories
In-Class Extra: Foreshadowing, frontloading, tension and intension
In-Class Writing

DAY # 10 - - Feb 27

Finding your voice, narrator, POV, and reliability as a craft trick
In-Class Extra: Dialogue
In-Class Writing

DAY # 11  - - Mar 1

CNF 1 (essays, chronicles, book reviews, vignettes, portraits)
In-Class Extra: Collage Book Review
In-Class Writing
Submissions for workshop DUE: groups A and B

DAY # 12 - - Mar 6

CNF 2 (biography, autobiography, autofiction)
In-Class Extra: Mock Workshop
In-Class Writing

Workshop Groups

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<tr>
<th>A:</th>
<th>B:</th>
<th>C:</th>
<th>D:</th>
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ATTENTION: check your dates up front. Let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

SUBMISSIONS and WORKSHOP dates (+ in-class writing / revising):

DAY # 13)  - - Mar 8  workshop Group A + submission groups C and D
→ March 13 to 19 - Spring Break
DAY # 14)  - - Mar 20  workshop Group B
DAY # 15)  - - Mar 22  workshop C + submission groups A and B
DAY # 16)  - - Mar 27  workshop D
DAY # 17)  - - Mar 29  workshop Group A + submission groups C and D
DAY # 18)  - - Apr  3  workshop Group B
DAY # 19)  - - Apr  5  workshop Group C + submission groups A and B
DAY # 20)  - - Apr  10 workshop Group D
DAY # 21)  - - Apr  12  workshop Group A + submission groups C and D
DAY # 22)  - - Apr  17 workshop Group B
DAY # 23)  - - Apr  19 workshop Group C
DAY # 24)  - - Apr  24  workshop Group D
DAY # 25)  - - Apr  26  → TBD: office hours (during class time) / portfolio / project / guest writer
DAY # 26)  - - May  1 → TBD: office hours (during class time) / portfolio / project / guest writer
DAY # 27)  - - May  3  → TBD: office hours (during class time) / portfolio / project / guest writer
DAY # 28)  - - May  8  → our last class - reading, celebration

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Part 7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. **Technology**

Phones should be turned off. If you need to use a laptop, please let me know. Otherwise, a notebook and a pen is all you need (besides printed copies of a few selected texts and submissions). No electronic devices are permitted during the in-class writing time. We will evaluate our practices throughout the course and see what is working or not for our specific group.

2. **Academic Honesty**

There’s zero tolerance for plagiarism. If you are struggling with turning in an assignment, please get in touch with me, rather than considering plagiarism. We will find a reasonable solution.

3. **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 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 Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd

4. **Student Wellness Policy**

Unless there is explicit evidence in the 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, can be seen as a cry for help, and will likely catch my attention. Please send an email putting this work in context before submitting. 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. I am always available via email, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Counseling Services: 726 Broadway New York, NY 10003 (212) 998-4780
Wellness Center: 24-Hour Hotline: (212) 443-999 Email: wellness.exchange@nyu.edu

Our classroom will be our safe space, an inspiring, creative, open, communicative, kind, warm, relaxed, fear-free and shame-free environment. I believe that this is the best way to nurture hardwork and intellectual rigor, as well as innovation and creativity.

Welcome and beware! We will play with fire (metaphorically, please!), fuel our passion for writing, and hopefully meet other cool arsonists.

All the best,

Nina