CREATIVE WRITING: INTRODUCTION TO PROSE AND POETRY
Course: CRWRI-UA.815.###
Time: Tuesday/Thursday 7:45 PM - 9:00 PM

Instructor: Lisa Gerard  
Email: Lisa.Gerard@nyu.edu  
Class Location: TBA  
Office Hours: Before class, by appointment  
Office Location: Lillian Vernon Writers House (58 West 10th Street) - Office #B004

Writers serve up book-dishes with their own special seasoning blend. Some take a few extra cranks on the humor grinder, while others baste with heart-stopping suspense. There are those who garnish with sprigs of everyday life while their peers generously drizzle imagined worlds.

David Foster Wallace puts what matters quite nicely: “What the really great artists do is they’re entirely themselves. They’re entirely themselves, they’ve got their own vision, they have their own way of fracturing reality, and if it’s authentic and true, you will feel it in your nerve endings.”

What interests this reader is the hook: Why do we keep reading—and why do we stop? What is it that lights up those nerve endings? This is what we’re here to identify.

Overview
The purpose of this course is to help you become a better writer. The course has two parts: (1) the writing workshop, and (2) the craft of prose and poetry.

In the craft portion, we will read prose and poems as writers. Rather than taking the literature-class approach, we will take apart the stories and poems with the objective of identifying what we would want to use to make our own writing feel more alive. What’s working, what isn’t, and why? What makes a character feel real? What holds our attention? We will learn the rules and how to break them. On workshop days, we’ll be looking at the writing of our peers with these same writerly and readerly lenses, and critique their writing both supportively and constructively, noting a piece’s strengths as well as its weaknesses. In-class writing prompts and other short writing assignments will put all of this into practice and give you new ways to flex your creative muscles. By the end of the semester, your journals and writing portfolios will have hopefully led you towards a better sense of your own voice, strengths, and interests as a writer.

Course Structure
Our class meets on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Tuesdays will be dedicated to lessons on craft, while Thursdays will be our day for workshopping your writing.

Tuesdays (Craft of Prose & Poetry)
- You are expected to read all assigned stories or poems before class. Readings will be posted to our class Brightspace page. Please bring these readings to class either as a hard
copy or on e-reader devices.
- In your writing journal, please write at least three lines/sentences that you either liked or
did not like from the assigned readings. You should be prepared to read these aloud and
share your reason(s) for liking/disliking it.
- You can also expect to do in-class writing assignments to help inspire new material.

**Thursdays (Workshop)**
- Students will submit work (please consult the schedule) THE THURSDAY BEFORE it
is scheduled to be workshopped (meaning, one week in advance). *Please note that there
is a page limit of 12 pages for prose pieces—and a minimum of 7 pages. Submissions
will be shared electronically via email.
- Over the course of the semester, you will workshop two pieces: either two prose (fiction
or creative nonfiction), or one prose and one poetry.
- Students are expected to have thoroughly read, marked up, and line edited each
submitted piece. (We will go over this in class prior to the first workshop.) You will also
prepare a brief response letter (one page) to the writer about the submission. Letters and
edits are to be sent to both the writer and the instructor by the start of class.
- Each submission slated for that particular day will be discussed and critiqued,
identifying both strengths and weaknesses. Two pieces will be workshopped each week.

**Required Texts**
All course materials will be posted to our class Brightspace page.

**Fiction**
| Brit Bennett | Jamaica Kincaid | Lorrie Moore |
| Michael Chabon | Stephen King | Curtis Sittenfeld |
| Suzanne Collins | Carmen Maria Machado | Brian K. Vaughan |
| Gillian Flynn | | |

**Poetry**
| Elizabeth Bishop | John Murillo | Sylvia Plath |
| Anne Carson | Frank O’Hara | Matthew Rohrer |
| Natalie Diaz | Sharon Olds | Nicole Sealey |
| Matthea Harvey | Morgan Parker | Tracy K. Smith |
| Terrance Hayes | | |

**Nonfiction**
| Megan Amram | Veronica Geng | David Sedaris |
| Rich Cohen | Riane Konc | Zadie Smith |
| Joan Didion | David Lipsky | Jen Spyra |
| Ian Frazier | George Saunders | |
Grading

40%  Workshop
- Each student will be workshopped twice (either two prose, or one prose and one poetry). All pieces must be submitted on time. Submissions will be graded on effort, not talent.
  o Submissions are to be double-spaced and in 12-point font (Times New Roman) with 1-inch margins.
  o Prose submissions should not exceed 12 pages—7 pages minimum. Poetry submissions should consist of 3-5 poems of substance. Please contact me if you are working in long-form.
- For each workshop submission, students are expected to prepare substantial edits as well as write a brief response letter (one page) to the writer. Edits and letters are to be shared with both the writer and instructor by the start of the corresponding workshop session.

40%  Participation
- All reading assignments are to be completed on time.
- Students are expected to participate in discussions on assigned readings. (I encourage you to write out some notes beforehand so you have some comments to refer to while discussing our readings.)
- Students will record three lines from the week’s readings that they liked or disliked in their writing journals and be prepared to share their reasoning.
- Students will schedule an office hour to review their progress.

20%  Final Portfolio and Writing Journal
- One copy of each original workshop submission
- Revised versions of the submissions
- Writing Journal (your notes, in-class writing assignments, etc)

Portfolio
By the final day of class, each student will submit a portfolio of writing. This will consist of the following: (1) cover page; (2) your original two workshopped submissions; (3) revisions of your two workshopped submissions.

Journals
On the first day of class, every student will receive a writing journal. This journal will be used for in-class writing assignments and other prompts that I might ask you to do as short take-home assignments. Students will also record the three sentences/lines they liked or disliked from the week’s reading assignments. I encourage as much note-taking as possible. Are you reading something interesting in your spare time or for another class? Did you see a movie or watch a show that gave you a crafty idea? Write it down. Lorrie Moore once pointed out what she thought was the difference between the writer and the non-writer: “The non-writer thinks she’ll remember it in the morning.” The writer knows she won’t, and she’s right. If something comes to you, don’t leave it for the morning.

Students will turn in their journals at the halfway point of the semester to review their progress. The journals will also be submitted along with the final portfolio for thorough review at the end.
of the semester.

**Attendance Policy**
Class will begin promptly at 7:45pm. Students are required to attend all classes. A writing workshop is a small community, and everyone’s presence and participation is necessary for it to function.

Because emergencies sometimes arise and people get sick, each student is allowed one unexcused absence (with the exception of the day you are being workshopped). For every unexcused absence that follows, a half-letter will be deducted from your grade. Two late arrivals will count as an absence, so please do be on time. Absences due to medical emergencies must be excused with a note from a doctor. Please bring the note to the next class you attend. If you are aware that you are going to be absent due to a religious holiday, please let me know by email before the class.

**Classroom Etiquette**
It is important to be respectful, constructive, and generous when giving feedback on another student’s work. An ideal workshop is open and supportive. Attacking your classmates will not make their writing or your writing better, nor will it help your grade. We will discuss in detail how to give constructive criticism. Disrespectful or inappropriate behavior in class will not be tolerated.

**Office Hours**
Each student is expected to meet with me at least once during the semester, but I do encourage meetings after each workshop turn (and to discuss craft and writing in general). Please email me at Lisa.Gerard@nyu.edu to set up a meeting time. My office (#B004) is on the basement level of the Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House, which is located at 58 West 10th Street, between 5th & 6th Avenues.

**Tech Policy**
With the exception of e-readers (should you choose to use one), we will observe a strict no tech policy. Laptops will not be allowed, and cellphones should be on silent and stowed away. In-class writing assignments will be done in your journals, which I will distribute on the first day of class.

**Extra Credit Policy**
You may obtain extra credit by completing two of the following assignments:

- Attend a reading and write a one-page response (Discuss your impressions and what you learned that you can apply to your own writing. Submit the response within one week of the event. I encourage you to attend events that are part of the Creative Writing Program’s public reading series. You can find more information [here](#)).
- Write a book review of at least two double-spaced pages (standard formatting applies) on a novel, short story collection, or collection of poetry.
- Go to a museum and write a poem or short story inspired by a work of art. You must include the museum ticket and a photo of the artwork along with the writing assignment.

**Plagiarism**
Don’t do it. You will receive a zero on the assignment and will be referred to the college for disciplinary action. NYU’s policy on academic integrity can be reviewed [here](#).

**Student Wellness**
If you submit a piece of creative work that exhibits potential dangers—such as depression, suicide, or explicit harm to oneself or others—expect that I will email you to check in. However, you can preemptively send me an email explaining that this is simply creative work and not reflective of your state of mind.

If you think your mental health and well-being is affecting your classroom performance, please let me know. Also remember that the NYU Wellness Exchange Hotline can be reached 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (212) 443-9999.

**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
Web site: [http://www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd)
SCHEDULE

Note: Readings and assignments are subject to change. You will be notified in advance should there be any adjustments.

Tuesday, January 24 — Introductions, Course Overview
Thursday, January 26 — Michael Chabon & Jamaica Kincaid
Tuesday, January 31 — Lorrie Moore & Curtis Sittenfeld
Thursday, February 2 — Workshop Protocol, Sample Workshop
Tuesday, February 7 — Suzanne Collins & Carmen Maria Machado
Thursday, February 9 — Workshop Round 1.1
Tuesday, February 14 — Gillian Flynn & Brit Bennett
Thursday, February 16 — Workshop Round 1.2
Tuesday, February 21 — Stephen King & Brian K. Vaughan
Thursday, February 23 — Workshop Round 1.3
Tuesday, February 28 — Elizabeth Bishop, Frank O’Hara, Sylvia Plath
Thursday, March 2 — Workshop Round 1.4
Tuesday, March 7 — Anne Carson, Terrance Hayes, Sharon Olds, Tracy K. Smith
Thursday, March 9 — Workshop Round 1.5
Tuesday, March 14 **Spring Break**
Thursday, March 16 **Spring Break**
Tuesday, March 21 — Natalie Diaz, John Murillo, Nicole Sealey

*Journals are due at the end of today’s class for midterm review. They will be returned by Tuesday, March 28. Midterm grades will be entered by March 31.*

Thursday, March 23 — Workshop Round 1.6
Tuesday, March 28 — Matthea Harvey, Morgan Parker, Matthew Rohrer
Thursday, March 30 — Workshop Round 2.1
Tuesday, April 4 — George Saunders & Zadie Smith
Thursday, April 6 — Workshop Round 2.2

Tuesday, April 11 — Ian Frazier & Veronica Geng

Thursday, April 13 — Workshop Round 2.3

Tuesday, April 18 — Joan Didion & David Lipsky

Thursday, April 20 — Workshop Round 2.4

Tuesday, April 25 — Rich Cohen & David Sedaris

Thursday, April 27 — Workshop Round 2.5

Tuesday, May 2 — Megan Amram, Riane Konc, Jen Spyra

Thursday, May 4 — Workshop Round 2.6 + Final Class Celebration

**FINAL PORTFOLIOS ARE DUE BY MONDAY, MAY 8, 5:00PM EST**

Final portfolios (and journals!) will be turned in directly to me, either in my office (58 West 10th Street, Office #B004) or to my mailbox in the Writers House. These will be graded and placed in my mailbox for you to pick up by Monday, May 15 at 5:00pm EST.