

Introduction to Creative Writing: Prose & Poetry
Classroom (TBD)
M/W: 9:30 – 10:45 AM

Instructor: Gustavo Aguiar (he/his)
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Office Hours: (TBD)

Course Overview

This introductory course to creative writing aims to introduce you to the main debates of the writing process, learn to read like writers and, above all, encourage you to write with discipline and regularity. No matter what your literary background, you are welcome here. No course in this framework could conceivably seek to provide a complete and comprehensive guide to the canon. So instead, we are going to explore a survey of some key texts and combine them with some theoretical reflection that allows us to create and develop our own work.

Writing is a fundamentally solitary act. Our class will try to make at least some parts of our creative processes less self-absorbed. Therefore, our main interest here is to create a community that supports and excels in the desire to share and learn in this process. We are going share not only what we have written, but also our favorite authors, the poems we know by heart, the most memorable excerpts for us. Hopefully, we'll understand why these texts make such an impression on us, we'll discover some new ones, and, in the meantime, we'll start to open to the long process of discovering our own literary voice.

Structure

This class is a composite of craft and workshop. Throughout the semester, you will be expected to generate five (5) writing assignments — at least one short story, one poem, and three in any genre you choose — which will be workshopped by your peers. Both your writing assignments and the letters you will write to each of your colleagues with comments about their work will make up your **final portfolio**. In addition to writing and workshopping your submissions on Wednesday, every Monday will be dedicated to a craft concept or theme, for which we will read an assortment of assigned texts.

Weekly Responses

Aside from weekly reading and writing assignments and workshop requirements, students will need to complete the following two assignments over the course of the semester:

1. Attend at least one literary reading in the community and write a one-page response paper.
2. Recite one poem, an opening paragraph or an excerpt from a book that is important for you. Presentations *need not be any longer than five minutes and cannot exceed ten minutes in length*. We will begin each Wednesday with one recitation — sign-ups will take place during our first class.

Final Portfolio

Your final portfolio will consist of all the material you've written over the semester. This includes:

1. your five **revised** writing assignments;
2. **all** critique letters you wrote to your colleagues;
3. the response paper to the literary reading you attended;
4. The poem, opening paragraph or excerpt of a book you choose to recite in class and a short text (up to 2 pages) explaining why you chose it.

Grading

Attendance & Participation — 30%

Submissions — 20%

Weekly Responses — 20%

Revised Portfolio — 30%

Required Texts

The Stranger, Albert Camus

The Passion According to G.H., Clarice Lispector

Scorched, Wajdi Mouawad

Further texts provided in excerpts (posted on NYU Classes), including but not limited to:

Why Read the Classics, Italo Calvino

Letters to a Young Novelist, Mario Vargas Llosa

Reading Like a Writer, Francine Prose

Writing: A Memoir of the Craft, Stephen King

Why I write, George Orwell

The Poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson

Autopsychography, Fernando Pessoa

Clandestine Happiness, Clarice Lispector

The Tell-Tale Heart, Edgar Allan Poe

Days of Abandonment, Elena Ferrante

The Worker in Construction, Vinicius de Moraes

The Trial, Franz Kafka

Frank Sinatra Has a Cold, Gay Talese

The Garden of Forking Paths, Jorge Luis Borges

Arrival at Santos, Elizabeth Bishop

Light is like water, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Araby, James Joyce

Elegy 1938, Carlos Drummond de Andrade

House Taken Over, Julio Cortázar

A Small Place, Jamaica Kincaid

The Unwomanly Face of War, Svetlana Alexievich

Coventry, Rachel Cusk

Selected odes by Pablo Neruda

Attendance Policy

Your presence in our class is essential. As a small group of writers, the trust and rapport we build as a community is integral to everyone's growth and progress. This is a discussion-based class. Come prompt and prepared. More than two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your grade. If you are 15 minutes late to class, it counts as half an absence. If you are late by 30 minutes or more, it will be a full absence.

Note on Workshops

A writing workshop is a sacred space, one of mutual respect, dignity, trust, and compassion. Sharing creative work can be a scary thing, but that's part of what makes this process so precious. It is absolutely imperative that we show one another respect. Everything that is submitted to workshop will (and must) remain confidential. This is nonnegotiable. Treat your fellow classmates as you would like to be treated, which means coming prepared every Monday having carefully read and annotated their work with thoughtful comments, and providing feedback in a kind and conscientious manner. We will discuss workshop etiquette more specifically in class. If you have any concerns, anxieties, or questions, please feel free to reach out to me. When workshop works, it is a magical thing.

Electronics Policy

Our assigned books and texts must be physical copies brought to class for discussion. All workshop materials brought to class must be paper copies. All electronics need to be completely silenced and out of sight beginning at 9:30 AM sharp.

Plagiarism

There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. All instances of plagiarism, obviously, will be reported to the department, no exceptions.

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>

Student Wellness Policy

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.

Class Plan

WEEK 1 – HOMO NARRANS

M – Welcome, Writers

W – The Narrator, a human god

WEEK 2 – PUTTING EXISTENCE INTO WORDS

M – The Shape of Stories

W – Conflict, Dilemma & Plot

WEEK 3 - CHARACTER

M – Workshop Group A

W – The illusion of being a human being

WEEK 4 – IMAGE AND SENSORY DETAIL

M - Workshop Group B

W – Writing with all senses

WEEK 5 – ATMOSPHERE, SPACE AND TIME

M - Workshop Group A

W – Building a world that transcends writing

WEEK 6 – DIALOGUE

M - Workshop Group B

W – Let's talk about talking

WEEK 7 – TELL & SHOW

M - Workshop Group A

W – See or not to see, that is the question

WEEK 8 – *spring break*

WEEK 9 – POINT OF VIEW, PERSPECTIVE, PERFORMANCE AND STYLE

M - Workshop Group B

W – Who am I when I write?

WEEK 10 – OTHER NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

M - Workshop Group A

W – Some other useful tools we all should know

WEEK 11 - BEGININGS AND ENDINGS

M - Workshop Group B

W - Punching the punchlines

WEEK 12 - BUILDING ETHOS, LOGOS AND PATHOS

M – Workshop Group A

W – Never pity yourself, but the reader

WEEK 13 – WRITING THE TRUTH

M – Workshop Group B

W – Truth is a labyrinth

WEEK 14 – FINAL

M – Party!