

Intro to Creative Writing: Prose and Poetry

CRWRI-UA.815.014

Instructor: Emma Bushmann

eb3871@nyu.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

MW 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Writing the Elements of Style

How, as readers, are we able to both love and anguish over writing that spans a myriad of emotional and moving content? What is it that allows an idiosyncratic story to emerge from a writer's imagination, transcend the page and language, and into the reader's consciousness? In this course, we will investigate how various writers, of both prose and poetry, achieve the creation of feeling in the reader. To do this, we will be breaking down these writers' use of six specific elements of style in order to better understand how we, in our own creative practices, can experiment, master, and ultimately discover our own unique styles that will best suit the stories we are trying to tell. We will find the heat of our creative intentions and learn to excavate them from the heart of our writing.

CLASS STRUCTURE:

The class will be broken into two parts: class discussion and workshop. Every two weeks we will focus on a different element of style. On Mondays, we will do our best to unpack how these elements are working, how they are pressuring the story/the poem into our imaginations, and how we can play with these elements in our own writing. We will also engage in short, freehand writing prompts.

Every Friday by 11 pm, students are expected to turn in (whether printed and placed in the instructor's mailbox OR by email) that week's creative assignment. Students up for workshop the following week will be expected to email (to both the class and the instructor) the creative piece they would like workshopped Friday by 11 pm. Students are required to write a one-page response for each of their peers' workshops. These are due on the day of the workshop. Students must bring one copy for their peer and another for the instructor. (See Course Schedule below)

COURSE EVALUATION:

Class and Community 40%

You must come to class! Whether class discussion or workshop, students are expected to show up – not just for themselves – but for each other. This includes:

- A) Being prepared to participate in the discussion of both the assigned readings and your peers' creative works.
- B) Coming to class with the required materials, including copies of the assigned readings for reference, copies of workshop responses for both your peers and the instructor, a notebook/paper and pen/pencil for freehand writing, a copy of your own creative work if you are being workshopped.

Otherwise, I do require meeting with me for office hours at least once during the semester.

Writing 40%

We will be doing a lot of writing in this class!

- A) Creative Assignments 20%

You will be turning in roughly one creative assignment a week, resulting in a portfolio of thirteen total creative assignments. These must be submitted to the instructor by 11 pm on Friday. Creative work will be evaluated on the following: risk-taking and originality, precision and richness of details, development, thoughtfulness, and polish, evidence of effort.

B) Workshop Responses 20%

For each workshop, you will be required to submit a one-page written response to both the writer and the instructor. This response will be graded on your attentiveness to the piece, as well as your generosity.

Final Portfolio 20%

For your final portfolio, you will revise **five** of your original, creative pieces. These works must have been written for the class and can include in-class writing exercises or creative assignments. You must revise at least one poem and one prose piece. The other three pieces you chose to revise are up to you! For our final class, each student will read from their final portfolio. This reading will count towards your grade.

MATERIALS:

Please bring something aside from a laptop with which you can use to write and take notes. We will be writing free hand in class, so access to pen/pencil and paper is essential. You may only use a laptop or tablet during workshop and class discussions to refer to electronic copies of the text, though printed copies are preferred. Also! When it's your turn to workshop, bring a clean copy of your story to class so that while your peers are discussing the piece, you can make notes onto your work. Cell phone use is prohibited during class, excepting an emergency.

ABSENCE POLICY AND LATE WORK:

I cannot accept late work. If you know, in advance, that you will be unable to turn in an assignment, please reach out to me as early as possible so that we can discuss your options.

Plan to arrive before class begins—anything more than 15 minutes late is considered an absence. More than two absences will result in a 10% final grade deduction. If you'd like your absence to be excused, you'll need to communicate your absence beforehand and provide documentation if appropriate.

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK:

Put your name on your work. Number your pages. (Please!) All work must be typewritten in a double-spaced, legible font, size 12, with one-inch margins. Your writings should represent your best effort and be free of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting.

PLAGIRISM:

There is a zero-tolerance plagiarism policy for both academic papers and creative pieces. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department, without exception.

NYU 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.

MENTAL HELATH:

As mentioned above, I am obligated to report any content that I believe could prove dangerous to the author of the work and/or others to the university. Please, keep this in mind when turning in materials for workshop, as well as during class discussions.

If I believe the week's reading material to be potentially upsetting and/or triggering to some, I will issue an email beforehand with potential trigger warnings. If you wish to **not** participate in the discussion that week, I will arrange a substitute reading and ask that you visit my office hours for a short discussion.

I do understand that life can be unexpected and complicated. If you find yourself unable to complete the classwork, I encourage you to reach out to me as soon as possible, so that we may discuss your options. Otherwise, I encourage you all to take care of yourselves and each other. Without community, we cannot expand our visions, and therefore we cannot write.

All required texts will be digitally provided by the instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE (all readings subject to change):

WEEK 1 – intro!

Monday, Jan. 24 – Syllabus Day and Class Guidelines
We'll make it fun! We'll do some writing!
Creative Assignment #1: due **Friday, Jan. 28 by 11 pm.**

Wednesday, Jan. 26 – Intro to Style
Class discussion, Frank O'Hara (from "*Lunch Poems*"), Amy Hempel ("*In the Cemetery where Al Jolson is Buried*")

WEEK 2 – Voice. Why do we listen?

Monday, Jan. 31
Class discussion, Bulawayo ("*Hitting Budapest*"), Julie Otsuka ("*The Buddha in the Attic*" excerpt)
Creative Assignment #2: due **Friday, Feb. 4 by 11 pm.** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Feb. 2
Class discussion, Morgan Parker (from "*There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé*"), Jericho Brown (from "*The Tradition*"), Etheridge Knight ("*Feeling Fucked Up*"), Alex Dimitrov ("*Monday*"), , Eduardo Corral ("*Monologue of a Vulture's Shadow*")

WEEK 3 – Structure. How are we beckoned?

Monday, Feb. 7
Class discussion, Olena Kalaytiak Davis (from "*Shattered Sonnets, Love Cards, and Other Off and Back Handed Impromptus*"), AE Stallings ("*Another Lullaby for Insomniacs*", "*LIKE*"), Elizabeth Bishop ("*Sestina*"), Randall Mann ("*September Elegies*")
Creative Assignment #3: due **Friday, Feb. 11 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Feb. 9
Workshop

WEEK 4 – Structure. How are we beckoned?

Monday, Feb. 14
Class discussion, Jenny Zhang ("*Why Were They Throwing Bricks*"), Justin Torres ("*Reverting to a Wild State*")
Creative Assignment #4: due **Friday, Feb. 18 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Feb. 16
Workshop

WEEK 5 – Workshop only.

Monday, Feb. 21
NO CLASS, PRESIDENT'S DAY
Creative Assignment #5: due **Friday, Feb. 25 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Feb. 25

Workshop

WEEK 6 – Mood. What do we feel?

Monday, Feb. 28

Class discussion, Anne Carson (from “*Glass, Irony and God*”), José Lomas Hervert (“*Los Ausentes*”)

Creative Assignment #6: **due Friday Mar. 4 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Mar. 2

Workshop

WEEK 7 – Mood. What do we feel?

Monday, Mar. 7

Class discussion, Michael Cunningham (“*White Angel*”), Willa Cather (“*My Antonia*” excerpt)

Creative Assignment #7: **due Friday Mar. 9 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Mar. 11

Workshop

WEEK 8 – SPRING BREAK

NO CLASS

WEEK 9 – Images and Objects. What do we find?

Monday, Mar. 21

Class discussion, Donika Kelley (“*Out West*”, “*Fourth Grade Autobiography*”, “*Catalogue*”), Louise Gluck (“*Mock Orange*”), The Blaze (“*Heaven*”, “*Territory*”),

Creative Assignment #8: **due Friday Mar. 23 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Mar. 25

Workshop

WEEK 10 – Images and Objects. What do we find?

Monday, Mar. 28

Class discussion, Gertrude Stein (from “*Tender Buttons*”), Carmen Maria Machado (from “*Her Body and Other Parties*”)

Creative Assignment #9: **due Friday, Apr. 1 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Mar. 30

Workshop

WEEK 11 – Enjambment. Where do we find it?

Monday, Apr. 4

Class discussion, James Schuyler (from “*Selected Works*”), Fairfield Porter (*Collected paintings*), TBA

Creative Assignment #10: **due Friday, Apr. 8 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Apr. 6

Workshop

WEEK 12 – Sentence Make-up. Where do we find it?

Monday, Apr. 11

Class discussion, Amy Hempel (“*Harvest*”), Alice Munro (“*The Progress of Love*”)

Creative Assignment #11: **due Friday, Apr. 15 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Apr. 13

Workshop

WEEK 13 – Word Choice and Vocabulary. In what condition do we find it?

Monday, Apr. 18

Class discussion, Jericho Brown (“*Odd Jobs*”), Dorothea Lasky (“*Do You Want to Dip the Rat*”), Lydia Davis (from “*The Collected Stories of,*”)

Creative Assignment #12: **due Friday, Apr. 22 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Apr. 20

Workshop

WEEK 14 – Figurative Language. Why do we stay, and why do we return?

Monday, Apr. 25

Class discussion, Jericho Brown (“*The Tradition*”), TBA

Creative Assignment #13: **due Friday, Apr. 29 by 11 pm** (Workshop pieces due 11 pm)

Wednesday, Apr. 27

Workshop

WEEK 15 – Figurative Language. Why do we stay, and why do we return?

Monday, May 2

Class discussion, ZZ Packer (“*Brownies*”), Nathan Englander (“*The Twenty-Seventh Man*”)

Wednesday, May 4

Workshop

WEEK 16 – hooray!

Monday, May 9

Final Portfolio Reading