

Introduction to Prose & Poetry
CRWRI-UA.815.001
Spring 2021
~Provisional Syllabus: Subject to Change~

Instructor: Jasmin Sandelson
Contact Information: jas1176@nyu.edu
Class: Mon & Weds 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM
Office Hours: By appointment

“They spoke, for they were full and needed to say.”
~ *Sula*, Toni Morrison

“How could one express in words these emotions of the body?”
~ *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf

OVERVIEW

Language is where minds and bodies meet. Language lets us share thoughts, sensations, appetites, agonies, dreams. In this class, we will study ways of using words: how can we give shape to what we feel? How can we write with all our senses?

Together, in a creative community, we will learn to read as writers: closely, critically. We will read fiction, nonfiction, and poetry side-by-side to consider what genre allows. We will also pay special attention to writers who inhabit identities that historically have been silenced—and to words that cause trouble. We will build our analytical vocabulary as we investigate what makes these words work. And we will apply these techniques ourselves, generating and workshopping new writing.

Writing is not an innate gift, but rather a craft—one that welcomes all people, one that we can practice. This class is a space for that practice, and for daring and play.

STRUCTURE

Monday classes are for craft. Each meeting has three parts. We begin with an **in-class writing exercise**. In-class writing will not be evaluated, but prompts might generate some material for you to develop in workshop submissions. Next, a **brief student presentation** will launch us into our **craft discussion** of what we have read.

Wednesday classes are workshops—the heart of the course. Each student will be workshopped three times over the semester. We will get to know each other’s sensibilities and styles, and we will respectfully and generatively engage with one another’s work.

GRADING & REPONSIBILITIES

Participation & Attendance – 40%

Through this class, we will learn from one another, as readers, writers, and thinkers. Everyone's full and active participation is essential. Please read assigned pieces closely: print them out and mark them up. Underline phrases that stand out to you—that you like, dislike, or question—and write in the margins. Come prepared with comments and questions. The same goes for workshops. Make sure you have generously read your peers' work, and come to class ready to contribute to a lively, constructive conversation.

Reading Presentation & Observations – 10%

Once during the semester, each student will begin our Monday craft class with a brief (5 minute) presentation on the readings (more on this in class). Several weeks, I will ask you to jot down "observations"—small things you notice, overhear, remember, or wonder about as you go about your days. On weeks these are due, I'll ask you to email me the observations before our craft class.

Workshop Submissions – 20%

You will submit three pieces of writing to be workshopped. There are no genre constraints—feel free to repeat, blur, or challenge genres. Prose submissions should be 5-12 double spaced pages, and poetry submissions should consist of up to 2 poems or 5 pages. Please bring 13 printed copies to distribute to class the week before your workshop date.

Your writing will not be graded on "quality"—you can expect full marks for submitting three thoughtful workshop submissions on time. Please see this class as an opportunity to take creative and intellectual risks.

Workshop Responses – 20%

Please read your peers' submissions at least twice; the first time as a reader, and the second time, more closely, as a writer. Please then mark up the manuscript, underlining notable phrasing and adding line-edits. Finally, please write a response letter—or "critique"—of at least 400 words. In these letters, describe what is working (or not) in literary terms, using the language and tools we consider in our craft classes; not what you "like" or "don't like." These letters will provide helpful feedback for your peers, but, importantly, they also will support your own literary development. Please bring to class your marked-up manuscript, for the writer, and two copies of your response letter—one for the writer, and one for me.

Revised Portfolio – 10%

Revision is critical to the writing process. At the end of the semester, you will hone some of your submitted work, integrating feedback from your peers and your new literary skills. You will turn in a revised portfolio of polished written work.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance & Punctuality

Please come to class. Be punctual and prepared. Each student is permitted one unexcused absence, but after the add/drop period, further missed classes—and late arrivals beyond 20 minutes—will reduce your letter grade by a half point.

Office Hours

Everyone must meet with me at least once during the semester, and I encourage you to do so as many times as would be helpful. Please email me at jas1176@nyu.edu to schedule.

Plagiarism

Don't turn in work that is not yours. The university has zero tolerance for plagiarism, which will prompt disciplinary action. If you are struggling to complete an assignment, feel free to reach out to me.

Technology

For our Monday morning exercises, you may write either on a laptop or with pen and paper. Other than that, cell phones and laptops are not allowed in class. If there is an accessibility concern, please talk to me and we'll work something out.

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, or learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities:

NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities

726 Broadway, 2nd Floor

New York, NY 10003

<http://www.nyu.edu/csd>; Phone: 212-998-4980; Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114

Student Wellness Policy

In this class, students will share non-fiction writing. Content relating to murder, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress, such as seems to be a possible cry for help, will prompt my attention. Before submitting any such work, please send me an email putting it into context. If you need someone to talk to at any point in the semester, please feel safe to reach out to me. I can guide you to the NYU Wellness Center.

COURSE BREAKDOWN

WEEK 1

Mon Jan 24 – Introductions

- Syllabus Overview
- Workshop Planning

Wed Jan 26

- [“On Finding Stories Everywhere,”](#) Marguerite Duras
- [“Against Catharsis: Writing is Not Therapy,”](#) T Kira Madden
- [“I Go Back to May 1937,”](#) Sharon Olds

* Sat Jan 29: *Workshop Group 1 Submission Due*

WEEK 2

Mon Jan 31 - Craft

- "[Woven](#)," Lidia Yuknavitch
- "[The Feels of Love](#)," T Kira Madden
- "[Rape Joke](#)," Patricia Lockwood

Wed Feb 2 – Workshop

- Group 1 Round 1
- *Workshop Group 2 Submission Due*

WEEK 3

Mon Feb 7 - Craft

- "[Poetry is Not a Luxury](#)" Audre Lorde
- Selected Poems, Audre Lorde
- "[Revealing and Obscuring Myself on the Streets of New York](#)," Hilton Als

Wed Feb 9 – Workshop

- Group 2 Round 1
- *Workshop Group 3 Submission Due*

WEEK 4

Mon Feb 14 - Craft

- "The Undying," Anne Boyer (excerpts)
- "The Empathy Exams," Leslie Jamison

Wed Feb 16 – Workshop

- Group 3 Round 1
- *Workshop Group 4 Submission Due*

WEEK 5

Mon Feb 21 – NO CLASS, President's Day

Wed Feb 23 – Workshop

- Group 4 Round 1
- *Workshop Group 1 Submission Due*

WEEK 6

Mon Feb 28 - Craft

- "Milkman," Anna Burns (chapters 1, 2)
- "[Girl](#)" – Jamaica Kincaid

Wed Mar 2 – Workshop

- Group 1 Round 2

- *Workshop Group 2 Submission Due*

WEEK 7

Mon Mar 7 - Craft

- “Ordinary Girls,” Jacquira Diaz (excerpts)
- “[We Real Cool](#),” Gwendolyn Brooks

Wed Mar 9 – Workshop

- Group 2 Round 2
- *Workshop Group 3 Submission Due*

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8

Mon Mar 21- Craft

- “Bluets,” Maggie Nelson

Wed Mar 23 – Workshop

- Group 3 Round 2
- *Workshop Group 4 Submission Due*

WEEK 9

Mon Mar 28 - Craft

- “We Love You Crispina,” Jenny Zhang
- “What Belongs to You,” Garth Greenwell (chapter 1)

Wed Mar 30 – Workshop

- Group 4 Round 2
- *Workshop Group 1 Submission Due*

WEEK 10

Mon Apr 4 - Craft

- “Deaf Republic,” Ilya Kaminsky

Wed Apr 6 – Workshop

- Group 1 Round 3
- *Workshop Group 2 Submission Due*

WEEK 11

Mon Apr 11 - Craft

- “Trash,” Dorothy Allison, (selected stories)
- “[Inventory](#)” and “Difficult at Parties,” Carmen Maria Machado

- Wed Apr 13 – Workshop
- Group 2 Round 3
 - *Workshop Group 3 Submission Due*

WEEK 12

- Mon Apr 18 - Craft
- “The Glass Essay” and “The Gender of Sound,” Anne Carson

Wed Apr 20 – NO CLASS

WEEK 13

- Mon Apr 25
- -“Oranges are not the Only Fruit” (excerpts) and “Why be Happy When You Could be Normal?” (excerpts), Jeanette Winterson

- Wed Apr 27 – Workshop
- Group 3 Round 3
 - *Workshop Group 4 Submission Due*

WEEK 14

- Mon May 2
- Readings to be selected over the semester

- Wed May 4 – Workshop
- Group 4 Round 3

WEEK 15

- Mon May 9: Final class!
- Celebration & Reading

* Sunday May 15 – *Final portfolio due at midnight*