

# Creative Writing: Introduction to Fiction and Poetry

Spring 2022

Section: CRWRI-UA.815.007

Instructor: Eddy Kosik

Time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 - 1:45 PM

Email: [emk8975@nyu.edu](mailto:emk8975@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: By appointment

*“When you’re writing, you’re trying to find out something which you don’t know. The whole language of writing for me is finding out what you don’t want to know, what you don’t want to find out. But something forces you anyway.” - James Baldwin*

## Course Overview

This introductory course explores the matter of what it means to be a strong reader and a strong writer. *What makes a poem or story successful? Why do we fall in love with some writing and not others? Who are you as a reader and as a writer? What is the hard, messy work of craft necessary for each of us to do in order to make our own writing more powerful?* Through sharing your own creative work, providing thoughtful feedback on your peers’ work, and investigating the diverse and divergent work of already published writers, you will arrive at your own answers to these questions through this course.

Though we will read poetry, short stories, essays, and excerpts from novels in this course, we will also try to challenge our expectations for each of those forms. This is not a course about what makes a poem a poem, or what qualifies as a short story, but instead how those lines can be blurry

## Class Structure

On **Tuesdays**, we will discuss craft and technique. We’ll talk as a class about the assigned texts in terms of what they achieved (or intended to achieve), whether or not we found them to be successful, and how these poems and stories can inform our own writing. How did this poem or story make us feel? How did it go about making us feel that? If a piece ended somewhere unexpected, what steps did the writer take to get us there? What lines stuck with us, and what made the language there so memorable?

On **Thursdays**, we workshop the poems or stories submitted the prior week. Every student will submit, over the course of the semester, two short stories (7-15 pages) and two poems (1-2 pages). You will print out copies of these submissions and distribute them to your peers in class.

**Note:** If we do not have class one particular Thursday, you are responsible for submitting your work to me by email at the same time you would in class (12:30 PM).

## Required Texts

Copies of the required texts will be shared and uploaded to the class site each week. It will be your responsibility to print out your own copy and bring them to class for our discussions.

## Course Requirements

The assigned readings are crucial for our Tuesday class discussions. While every student may not participate equally in each class, or contribute in the same manner, you are expected to be an attentive, respectful participant in the discussions.

**Each week, one student will give a 5-10 minute presentation contextualizing the materials we are discussing in class that Tuesday.** There are many ways to approach these presentations: who are the authors, and when did they write these poems/stories? Did you notice an unexpected link between the readings this week? Generally, though, the presentations should jumpstart our discussions.

**If you are not presenting, please come to class with at least three observations you have about each reading.** Those observations can be simple: “I thought this line was beautiful”, “corny”, “heartbreaking”, “funny”. The writing could have made you think of a connection in an earlier story we read. Try to think about what the writer did to lead you to this feeling or observation.

**On Thursdays, workshop material is due. It is your responsibility to print out copies of your submission and distribute them to the class prior to your workshop day.** Submissions should be 12-point Times New Roman font. Fiction manuscripts should be double-spaced.

**When you are not workshopping, you are expected to write a one page, single-spaced response to each student’s work.** You must bring two hard copies to class (one for your fellow student, and one for me). Think of this response as a generous letter of constructive feedback, addressing what was successful in the writing and what left you with questions. When we write these, we are not saying that the writing was good or bad. *We are absolutely not making judgements or assumptions about the writer.* What we are trying to do is identify what the writing is intending to accomplish, and offer specific feedback on the writing’s successes and how it can better accomplish its goals as a piece.

Try not to refer to the poem or the story rather than the writer. “The story succeeded when it did this.” “The poem may be more effective this way.”

## Participation

You are expected to participate regularly in class. The more engaged the discussion, whether we disagree or agree, the more everyone will get out of this class. Observe your own reactions to the assigned writings so that you have something to share in class. Take notes as you read so that you can refer back to these during discussion. Arrive curious about your peers' thoughts and feelings.

## **Attendance**

You are expected to come to class on-time. If you are expecting to miss class for a legitimate reason, just email me. If there's an emergency, please email me as soon as you are able to. Otherwise, each absence counts as a 5% loss on your total grade. This means that one unexcused absence costs you a quarter of your attendance grade. If you are fifteen minutes late to class, you are late. Every two latenesses will be counted as one absence.

## **Plagiarism**

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the department. Please read NYU's Academic Integrity Policy here: <https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>

## **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**

The Wellness Exchange's private hotline (212-443-9999) puts students, staff, and faculty in touch with a qualified professional. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NYU Health Center, located at 726 Broadway (3rd and 4th floors), offers virtual services as well as walk-ins. **Anxiety and depression may accompany the discipline of creative writing. You do not have to work through mental health issues alone.** 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.

Sharing writing is a vulnerable act. **Unless the writer tells us otherwise, we will assume the speaker is fictional and address the material accordingly.**

Certain content-- such as that relating to murder, depression, suicide, sexual assault, or severe mental distress-- could be interpreted as a cry for help. Such instances would prompt the instructor's attention to the student's wellbeing. If your work could conceivably trigger such a

response, please send an email placing this work in proper context before submitting the work to the class.

## **READING SCHEDULE\***

### **Jan 24th/26th- Introductions**

“How to Write an Autobiographical Novel”, Alexander Chee

“Eight Letters to a Young Writer”, Teju Cole

Workshop Etiquette & Review

### **February 1st/3rd – Structure**

Yoko Ogawa, “Afternoon at the Bakery”

Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People”

Jhumpa Lahiri, “A Temporary Matter”

*Workshop A*

### **February 8 & 10 – Structure**

Ocean Vuong, “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong”; “Seventh Ring of Hell”

Marie Howe, “Magdalene”

Hanif Abdurraqib, “For the Dogs”

Richard Siken, “Primer for the Small Weird Loves”; “Scherezade”

*Workshop B*

### **February 15 & 17 – Storytelling/Plot**

Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild”

Lorrie Moore, “The Jewish Hunter”

*Workshop C*

### **February 22 & 24 – Storytelling/Plot**

Ann Carson, Excerpt from *Autobiography of Red*

Taije Silverman, “Syros, 1989” & “Fugue”

Natasha Rao, “What It Was Like”

*Workshop D*

### **March 1 & 3 – Dialogue**

Susan Sontag, “The Way We Live Now”

Jenny Zhang, “Why Were They Throwing Bricks?”

Carl Phillips, TBA

*Workshop A*

### **March 8 & 10 – Perspective**

Jim Grimsley, TBA

Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl”

Kaveh Akbar, “Despite My Best Efforts Even My Prayers Have Turned to Threats”

Fatimah Asghar, “Pluto Shits on the Universe”

*Workshop B*

**March 15 & 17 - Spring Break**

**March 22 & 24 – Perspective**

Bryan Washington, TBA

Justin Torres, excerpt from *We the Animals*

*Workshop C*

**March 29 & 31 – Voice**

Excerpt from Viet Thanh Nguyen's *The Sympathizer*

*Workshop D*

**April 5 & 7 – Worldbuilding**

Edward P Jones, "The Night Rhonda Ferguson was Killed"

Margaret Atwood, "Shapeshifters"

Carlos Santos Perez, "Halloween in the Anthropocene"

*Workshop A*

**April 12 & 14 – Scene and Setting**

Alice Munro, "Friendship"

Jesmyn Ward,

Henry Dumas

*Workshop B*

**April 19 & 21 – Character**

ZZ Packer, "Brownies"

Otessa Moshfegh, TBA

*Workshop C*

**April 26 & 28 – Mischief, Magic**

Carmen Maria Machado, "The Husband Stitch"

Henry Dumas, "The Bone Ark"

Danez Smith, "Dear White America"

*Workshop D*

**May 3 & 5 –**

Ann Boyer, "What is 'Not Writing'?"

Alexander Chee, "100 Things About Writing a Novel"

Portfolio Readings

