

Casey Leeds  
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Intro to Prose and Poetry, Spring 2022  
CRWRI-UA.815.015  
Tuesday/Thursday 3:30pm-4:45pm

*"Don't bend; don't water it down; don't try to make it logical; don't edit your own soul according to the fashion. Rather, follow your most intense obsessions mercilessly."*

**--Franz Kafka**

This workshop is designed to explore the basic elements of both stories and poems, and then to start writing them. Over the course of the semester, you will write one short story, one poem, and one other piece of your choice. We will read a wide variety of exceptional short stories and poems, and explore them from a craft perspective. As a workshop, this small writerly community will offer you the opportunity to take risks with your writing—play with new techniques, venture into uncomfortable territories.

**Readings:**

All readings will be posted online.

**Course Structure:**

The course is split into workshop and craft components. Tuesdays are devoted to workshopping pieces written by students. On Thursdays, we will have craft discussions focused on the assigned readings. During craft days, we might do in-class writing exercises, watch or listen to the pieces being performed, in addition to our discussions.

**Calendar:**

Tuesday Jan 25: Class Introductions, Workshop culture discussion, Workshop signup

Thursday: Jan 27: "Bloodchild" Octavia Butler

Tuesday Feb 1st Fiction Workshop

Thursday Feb. 3rd "Snow, Glass, Apples" Neil Gaiman

Tues. Feb 8th Fiction Workshop

Thurs. Feb. 10th "Ark of Bones" "Will the Circle be Unbroken?" Henry Dumas

Tues. Feb 15th Fiction Workshop

Thurs. Feb. 17th Poetry: "The Echo Tree" and poems by Henry Dumas, Nikki Giovanni

Tues. Feb. 22 Poetry Workshop

Thurs. Feb. 24th “The Way the Dead Love” and poems by Bukowski, June Jordan, Anne Sexton

Tues. March 1st: Poetry Workshop

Thurs. March 3rd “Cathedral” and poems by Raymond Carver, Elizabeth Bishop

Tues. March 8th Poetry Workshop

Thurs. March 10th “The Husband Stitch” Carmen Maria Machado

Spring Break

Tues March 22nd: Fiction Workshop

Thurs. March 24th: “Brownies” ZZ Packer

Tuesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>: Fiction Workshop

Thursday March 24<sup>th</sup>: Selections from *Infinite Jest*, David Foster Wallace

Tuesday March 29<sup>th</sup>: Fiction Workshop

Thursday March 31<sup>st</sup>: “Sonny’s Blues” and poems by James Baldwin

Tuesday April 5<sup>th</sup>: Poetry Workshop

Thursday April 7<sup>th</sup>: Amiri Baraka, Melissa Lozada-Oliva, Allen Ginsburg

Tuesday April 12<sup>th</sup>: Choice Workshop

Thursday April 14<sup>th</sup>: “Woman Hollering Creek” and poems by Sandra Cisneros

Tuesday April 19<sup>th</sup>: Choice Workshop

Thursday April 21<sup>st</sup>: “Escape From Spiderhead,” George Saunders

Tuesday April 26<sup>th</sup>: Choice Workshop

Thursday April 28<sup>th</sup>: fiction by Helen Oyeyemi, poems by Gloria Anzaldua, Adrienne Rich

Tuesday May 3<sup>rd</sup>: Choice Workshop

Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup>: Joyce Carol Oates

**Final Portfolios Due: May 10th**

**Office Hours:** You are expected to sign up for at least two office hour appointments throughout the semester. Office hours are by appointment only—please email me to set up an appointment. This is an excellent opportunity to get more personalized feedback, support, or to just check in and talk about whatever is on your mind.

### **Grading:**

**25% Workshop Submissions:** Over the semester you must submit for workshop: 1 short story (6+ pages), 1 to 3 poems (spanning 2+ pages) and at least one other work of your choice (which must not be a revision of a previously submitted work). Submissions are due five days before your scheduled workshop--this ensures that your classmates have time to read your work with care and to provide quality feedback. It is fine to submit unfinished work, experimental work, or a piece that you've been struggling with--the workshop environment is intended to be supportive.

**25% Workshop Responses and annotations:** email the students scheduled to be workshopped with thoughtful and constructive feedback by 8:00am before the scheduled workshop. Comments should be approximately 1-2 pages in length. Line by line annotations/edits should be made via track changes in Word or Google Docs and emailed to your workshop mate prior to the workshop. In your email, you must CC me both your comments and annotations. This part of the workshop is integral to your grade and benefit in the class.

**10% Reading Responses:** You will be required to write a short response to the assigned readings for Thursdays. They need only be a half page or so long. What I am looking for here are your general impressions of the piece, then insight as to *what* the piece is doing, and *how* it does that. These responses will prepare you for our discussions on Thursdays. You also have the option to write a brief story/poem that attempts to demonstrate a particular quality of the assigned work, in lieu of a critical response—you are welcome and encouraged to share these pieces with the class. You will eventually include all of these responses in your final portfolio at the end of the semester.

**20% Participation/Attendance:** Workshops rely upon participation. Your insights on other student's work, readings, and your engagement with writing exercises are all valuable and enrich not only your own abilities, but those of your fellow classmates as well. So please contribute to all class discussions and engage with any in-class activities. I understand that some of us are shy than others, and I will be sensitive to that—I will be looking for a genuine effort to participate.

**20% Final Portfolio:** At the end of the semester, you will turn in all of the work you have done this semester, including two revisions. Include the reading responses you've written over the

semester. Finally, include in your final portfolio a self-assessment of your work: what your creative process and development was like, including your revision process.

**Attendance Policy:** In order to accommodate students' shifting schedules during the add/drop period, I will not count absences until after the add/drop period is over, **February 6<sup>th</sup>**. Otherwise, are allowed two unexcused absences throughout the semester. After that, I may lower your grade by one degree for each subsequent absence, unless such absences are excused for documented emergencies. For example, an A will be reduced to an A-, and so on. If you are going to be absent, please let me know as soon as possible.

**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:** Your health and wellbeing is more important than this course. Unless I see explicit evidence in workshop that the speaker of a work is the writer themselves, I 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 my 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.

**Plagiarism:** Please, for the love of dog, do not do this. NYU has a very strict code of conduct against plagiarism, and we are required to report such instances to administration. Grade consequences are severe. Should you find yourself feeling backed into a corner and inclined to plagiarize, stop! Instead, contact me immediately, via email, so we can talk and work out a solution—there is always a solution.