

Introduction to Creative Writing | CRWRI-UA.815.005  
Instructor: Sarah (Sal) Lieberman

Monday/Wednesday 2:00-3:15pm

Location:

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Phone: (785) 764-8703

Office Hours: TBD

**Overview** — Throughout my life, I have identified as a writer of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, practicing both personally and professionally. I see the entire spectrum of literature to be full of wisdom and opportunity. While learning our craft through a wide array of texts, I believe we can learn just as much from each other. I put a great deal of value on the workshop setting, both for its generative possibilities and for the special opportunities to make our personal writing lives more open. Through reading assignments, reading responses, small-group, and entire-class workshops, I hope to pivot our lens constantly back toward human storytelling and extra human craft.

**Objectives** — The primary objective of this course is to create both a personal writing practice and a collaborative, sustaining workshop. These tools and structures can extend far beyond this semester into a lifetime of writing. In learning to be curious, thoughtful readers of literature, we will expand our own abilities and desires to write on our own. In learning to be generous, insightful readers of each other's work, we can build writing communities that are both encouraging and inspiring.

### **Course Requirements and Grading Policy** —

Workshop Submissions (30%) You will have the opportunity to submit writing to the entire class 3 times this semester. This will include 1 poetry submission, 1 fiction submission, and 1 submission of your choice (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, hybrid). Prose submissions should be between 10-20 double-spaced pages (12 pt. font). Poetry submission should be between 3-10 pages (formatting of your choice). The Wednesday before your workshop, please bring 15 printed copies of your piece to class.

Our class will also include 3 small group workshops, 1 in fiction, 1 in poetry, and 1 for a revision. These mini workshops with your peers can focus on excerpts of your piece for your upcoming, full-class workshop or entirely separate pieces. These should not exceed 10 pages of double-spaced fiction (12 pt. font) or 5 pages of poetry (formatting of your choice). The Monday before the small group workshops, please bring 3 printed copies of your piece to class.

In-Class Participation and Substantive Feedback (30%) Please come to class on-time ready to thoughtfully discuss the readings and workshop responses. I will never let shyness stand in the way of a fair grade! Therefore, participation considers attendance, workshop letters, and in-class conversation to be of equal value. Workshop letters should be emailed to authors by the time of Wednesday class with myself ([sal662@nyu.edu](mailto:sal662@nyu.edu)) cc-ed. Workshop letters should highlight *at least 3* strengths of the piece and offer *at least 3* potential revisions or points of confusion. Line-

edits should be thorough, kind, thoughtful and brought to class to hand back to authors after workshop.

Weekly Responses (10%) Assigned readings will be accompanied by written responses. These will offer opportunities to write both creatively and analytically. I am interested in both your responses to and interactions with the text along with how these pieces may be generative for your own writing. Consider these to be close readings, journal responses, free writes, flash fiction, first draft poems— whatever works for you that week. Writing responses need not exceed 1 double-spaced page and should be printed and turned-in at the start of Monday class. I will grade these responses for completion.

Final Portfolio (30%) At the end of the semester, you will turn in a physical collection of the three revised pieces that you turned in for entire-class workshop. Additionally, this will include a 1 double-spaced page (12pt. font) reflection on the collection of your writing, your experience in workshop, and an explanation of which revisions you chose/chose not to integrate and why. No one's opinion in workshop (including my own) reflects a rule of law, and your authentic vision of the piece takes priority. Your portfolio will not be graded on whether or not you integrated the feedback but on the decisions/thought that went into the final product.

**Attendance** — You are allowed one unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence beyond that will drop your letter grade automatically a third of a letter grade (A to A-, B+ to B.) Being inexplicably more than 10 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. For excused absences and excused lateness, please email me as soon as possible! I will be compassionate and don't require full disclosure, but, to your best ability, respect your classmates' time, effort, and vulnerability on workshop days.

**Plagiarism** — Plagiarism means instantly failing the course and being reported to the overseers of academic integrity. Please don't plagiarize. I am only interested in work that is truly yours.

**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 register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, or at 726 Broadway (2nd floor) or at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

**Student Wellness Policy** — Unless there is 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 receive 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.

**Texts** — The following texts should be obtained from the library or bookstores:

*The Emissary* – Yoko Tawada

*Simulacra* – Aireia D. Matthews

*Slow Lightning* – Eduardo Corral

*Digest – Gregory Pardlo*  
*Carmen Maria Machado – In the Dream House*  
*Anne Boyer – The Undying*

Other texts for each week will be posted by me to your NYU Classes course.

## **SEMESTER OUTLINE —**

### WEEK 1 Introductions

Mon. Syllabus

Wed. Reading: *Joan Didion—Why I Write*

*George Orwell—Why I Write*

In-Class: Setting up writing practice for this class, free-write

*James Baldwin—The Artist’s Struggle for Integrity (Audio, excerpt)*

## **Part I: FICTION**

### WEEK 2: Character

**Mon.:** Reading: *Sticks – George Saunders*

*How To Be An Other Woman—Lorrie Moore*

In-Class: Reading Response Due

*George Saunders – On Story (Video)*

**Wed.:** Mock Workshop

### WEEK 3: World-Building

**Mon:** Small Group Workshops (fiction submissions)

**Wed:** Reading: *The Emissary – Yoko Tawada*

In-Class: Reading Responses Due

\*\*\*Workshop Group 1 Fiction Submissions due

### WEEK 4: Point of View

**Mon.:** Reading: *Sonny’s Blues – James Baldwin*

*What We Talk About When We Talk About Love – Raymond Carver*

In-Class: Reading Responses Due

**Wed.:** Workshop Group 1 (fiction submissions)

\*\*\*Workshop Group 2 Fiction Submissions Due

### WEEK 5: Dialogue

**Mon.:** Reading: *Hills Like White Elephants – Ernest Hemingway*

*Recitatif – Toni Morrison*

In-Class: Reading Response Due

**Wed.:** Workshop Group 2 (fiction submissions)

\*\*\*Workshop Group 3 Fiction Submissions Due

### WEEK 6: Beginnings and Endings

**Mon:** Reading: *The State – Tommy Orange*  
(Transition to Poetry)  
*Anne Carson on Writing from the Margins of her Mind*  
*The Glass Essay – Anne Carson*  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 3 (fiction submissions)

## **Part II: POETRY**

WEEK 7: Form

**Mon:** Small Group Workshops (poetry submissions)  
**Wed.:** Reading: *Poetry Packet (Emily Dickinson, Shakespeare, Audre Lorde)*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
\*\*\*Workshop Group 1 Poetry Submissions Due

WEEK 8: Conversation & Multimedia

**Mon.:** Reading: *Simulacra – Aireia D. Matthews*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 1 (poetry submissions)  
\*\*\*Workshop Group 2 Poetry Submissions Due

WEEK 9: Language

**Mon.:** Reading: *Slow Lightning – Eduardo Corral*  
*All the Aphrodisiacs – Cathy Park Hong*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 2 (poetry submissions)  
\*\*\*Workshop Group 3 Poetry Submissions Due

WEEK 10: Rhythm

**Mon.:** Reading: *Digest – Gregory Pardlo*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 3 (poetry submissions)  
\*\*\*Workshop Group 1 Choice Submission Due

## **Part III: NONFICTION & HYBRID**

WEEK 12: Whose Stories

**Mon.:** Reading: *Carmen Maria Machado – In the Dream House*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 1 (submission of your choice)  
\*\*\*Workshop Group 2 Choice Submission Due

WEEK 13: Subverting Form

**Mon.:** Reading: *Anne Boyer – The Undying*  
In-Class: Reading Responses Due  
**Wed.:** Workshop Group 2 (submission of your choice)

\*\*\*Workshop Group 3 Choice Submission Due

WEEK 13: Research

**Mon.:** Reading: *Michael Waters (Guest Speaker)- The Untold Story of Queer Foster Families*

In-Class: Reading Responses Due

**Wed.:** Workshop Group 3 (submission of your choice)

#### **Part IV: WRAPPING UP**

WEEK 14: Establishing Writing Practice

**Mon.:** Reading: *Writers on Writing – Susan Sontag*

In-Class: Reading Responses Due

**Wed.:** Small Group Workshops (Final Portfolio and Revisions)

WEEK 15:

Mon.: Final Celebration & Class Reading

\*\*\* Physical copies of the final portfolio due