

Instructor: DeeSoul Carson

Tuesday/Thursday 11 am – 12:15 pm

Location: Bobst LL1-48, Washington Square

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:30 pm - 2 pm by appt.

“If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: read a lot and write a lot.”~ Stephen King

The Low-Down: By now, y’all have spent a large portion of your academic careers examining texts and asking: *What is the author doing? What does this story/poem mean?* We will move from asking “what” an author is doing or what their work means and towards “how” their craft choices lead us to create meaning from a text. Craft, in this context, refers to the author’s construction of language and the techniques they employ. In the pedagogical spirit of Kaveh Akbar, I would like for us to think of the workshop space as a lab. In a paraphrasing of his words, think of the workshop not as a place for us to “rehabilitate” our writing, but instead as a place to experiment, take risks, and learn from our peers.

The Breakdown: Grading for the class will be determined by the following components –

- **Attendance/Participation (30%):** The workshop’s strength comes from the presence and participation of everyone in the class. You cannot participate in a discussion if you are not present! You will be allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. **(Excused absence means you have an official circumstance or otherwise extenuating circumstance and have communicated the absence sometime before class.)** 15 minutes late = half an absence & 30+ minutes late = full absence. Each full unexcused absence will result in the loss of half a letter grade.
- **Weekly Reading Responses (15%):** Each week, students will submit a response paper of ~300 words in response to the upcoming week’s readings. The first paragraph should focus on general impressions, observations, or reactions to the texts (with a specific focus on their relation to the upcoming week’s topic). The second paragraph should aim to come to a conclusion about the work, put the texts in conversation with one another, or relate the ideas presented to some relevant circumstance. These will serve as both evidence of the readings

having been done and preparation for craft discussion. Reading responses should be submitted via Brightspace by 11:59 PM the night before Tuesday's craft class.

- **Feedback Letters/Critique (15%):** Starting in week 2, students bring a feedback letter for each person being workshopped and notes and comments on the workshopped piece itself. The letter should be respectful and generous. Try to give positives, and then communicate what aspects may have confused you or felt unclear. Address different elements of the piece, and remember to be specific. You should email one copy to me the night before the workshop.
- **Literary Event Response Paper (15%):** Learning to write and read critically means not limiting your engagement with texts to class materials, discussions, and assignments. All students will attend one public reading (through the Creative Writing Program or other public reading) and write a one-page response. If the student is unable to attend a reading, I will give an alternative assignment. This should be submitted by 11:59 PM on 4/21.
- **Final Portfolio (25%):** The final portfolio will be a PDF with the materials in the following order: Cover page (Name, Class, Semester) → 12 Weekly Exercises → 1 Revised poem + Revision Letter → 1 Revised Short Story + Revision Letter. Each weekly exercise should be titled and specify which weekly exercise it was. Ex. [Exercise title] (Weekly Exercise #1).
 - **Workshop Revisions:** Included with the portfolio should be letters outlining which revisions were made based on feedback, as well as suggestions you did not incorporate, along with your reasoning for both. You should be able to explain the choices you end up making regarding your work.
 - **Weekly Exercises:** Every week (excluding the week before Spring Break & the final week of our classes together), I will give students a writing exercise to do in their own time. Poems do not have a specified length (unless otherwise noted), but fiction exercises should be between 1 - 2 pages.

Workshop & Etiquette: Each student will workshop **2 short stories & 3 poems**. These pieces can expand from the exercises given in class, although they do not have to. Students will bring copies of their work for everyone in the class **a WEEK in advance** for their workshop. For the first fiction workshop, the students will bring their work to the class immediately preceding their workshop. The pieces should have titles, and the header should include the author's name, the semester season and

year (Spring 2022), and the date of the workshop. Fiction should be 5 - 15 pages, double spaced, 12 pt font, Times New Roman. Poetry does not have a specified length but should be in Times New Roman or Garamond.

Since we will all be coming from different writing backgrounds, there will be an expectation of respect and generosity of feedback. The author will not participate in discussing their work but can address any questions posed at the end. There will be more on this when we go into workshops, but there will be an emphasis on **descriptive criticism**.

Conferences: Students will meet with me for office hours at least **two times** during the semester (once before spring break, once after). Office hour slots will be 15 min each. Students should come to meetings with detailed questions, topics for discussion, or pieces they would like to discuss.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Period. I find that you have plagiarised, I will have to report it to the department. Let's not get there.

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

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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 the 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 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.

Schedule: Tuesday Classes will be “craft” classes dedicated to discussing the readings for the week concerning the week’s focus. Thursday classes will be “workshop” classes devoted to workshopping the work of your peers. Unless otherwise specified, I will provide the materials for reading via Brightspace.

PART 1: FICTION

Week One: Who We Are, Why We’re Here - Intros and Logistics

T, Jan 25th Introductions, Go Over Syllabus, Assign Workshop Groups, Logistics

Reading: “The Nature and Aim of Fiction” by Flannery O’Connor

Th, Jan 27th *Readings:* “The Tell-Tale Heart” (Poe), “Bullet in the Brain” (Wolff)

Week Two: Putting Us There - Scene

T, Feb 1st *Readings:* “Reunion” (Cheever), “No One’s a Mystery” (Tallent), “How to Write the Perfect Scene...” from Masterclass

Due: Reading response #1. Group A distributes stories.

Th, Feb 3rd Workshop Group A

Due: Feedback letters for Group A. Group B distributes stories.

Week Three: Who are you, really? - Character

T, Feb 8th *Readings:* “The Night Rhonda Ferguson Was Killed” (Jones), “Blue Roses” (Hwang),
Creating a Scene (Baxter)

Due: Reading response #2.

Th, Feb 10th Workshop Group B

Due: Feedback letters for Group B. Group C distributes stories.

Week Four: Point A → Point B - Plot

T, Feb 15th *Readings:* “Sea Oak” (Saunders), “Super-Frog Saves Tokyo” (Murakami)

Due: Reading response #3.

Th, Feb 17th Workshop Group C

Due: Feedback letters for Group C. Group A distributes stories.

Week Five: A Matter of Perspective - POV

T, Feb 22nd *Readings:* “Black Box” (Egan), “Hwang’s Billion Brilliant Daughters” (Kim), “Sonny’s
Blues” (Baldwin), “Points of View In Fiction Writing” (Jericho Writers)

Due: Reading response #4.

Th, Feb 24th Workshop Group A

Due: Feedback letters for Group A. Group B distributes stories.

Week Six: Talk that Talk - Dialogue

T, Mar 1st *Readings:* “A Shop” (So), “Our Native Language is Dialogue” (Stein) “How to Write Dialogue in Fiction” (Jericho Writers)

Due: Reading response #5.

Th, Mar 3rd Workshop Group B

Due: Feedback letters for Group B. Group C distributes stories.

Week Seven: Setting the Scene - Showing Vs. Telling

T, Mar 8th *Readings:* “The Lottery” (Jackson), “A Temporary Matter” (Lahiri)

Due: Reading response #6.

Th, Mar 10th Workshop Group C

Due: Feedback letters for Group C. Group A distributes poems.

SPRING BREAK

PART 2: POETRY

Week Eight: Writing How You Talk - Voice

T, Mar 22nd *Readings:* Sarah Kay on Spoken Word (Ted Talk), “The Electric Slide Is Not A Dance, Man!” (Olayiwola), “landless acknowledgment” (Marshall) “Poem” (O’Hara) “Full Moon” (Tu Fu, Trans. by Kenneth Rexroth)

Due: Reading response #7.

Th, Mar 24th Workshop Group A

Due: Feedback letters for Group A. Group B distribute poems.

Week Nine: A Thousand Words - Image

T, Mar 29th *Readings:* “Writing & Knowing” from *The Poet’s Companion*, “The Wooden Overcoat” (Barot), “Artifact” (Emerson), “Apparation of Knives” (Smith), “Electrons” (Madievsky), “Indigo” (Bass)

Due: Reading response #8.

Th, Mar 31st Workshop Group B

Due: Feedback letters for Group B. Group A distribute poems.

Week Ten: Breaking It Apart - The Line

T, Apr 5th *Readings:* “Bag of Mice” (Flynn), “Reverse: A Lynching” (Elkins), “The Committee Weighs In” (Cohen), “we real cool” (Brooks), “this is just to say” (Williams), “Why

some people be mad at me sometimes” (Clifton), “Upon Reading that Eric Dolphy...” (Murillo)

Due: Reading response #9.

Th, Apr 7th Workshop Group A

Due: Feedback letters for Group A. Group B distribute poems.

Week Eleven: Now Put it in a Box! – Form

T, Apr 12th *Readings:* “Hip-Hop Ghazal” (P. Smith), “pantoum for aiyana & not a single hashtag” (Marie), “St. Mathew’s Pentecostal Church” (Austin), “One Art” (Bishop), “rose” (D. Smith), “When the Men Come Looking” (Pineda)

Due: Reading response #10.

Th, Apr 14th Workshop Group B

Due: Feedback letters for Group B. Group A distribute poems.

Week Twelve: Mythmaking – (Re)Imagining in Poetry

T, Apr 19th *Readings:* “Myth” (Trethewey) “Ganymede” (Brown), “Persephone Sets the Record Straight” (McCallum), “Aladdin’s Genie on Emancipation” (Olayiwola), “Introduction to Quantum Theory” (Choi)

Due: Reading response #11.

Th, Apr 21st Workshop Group A

Due: Feedback letters for Group A. Group B distribute poems. Turn in any Literary Event Response papers by the end of the day.

Week Thirteen: A Poetics of Protest – Resistance Via Poetry

T, Apr 26th *Readings:* “A Politics of Mere Being” (Phillips), “Good Bones” (Smith), “shout out to my niggas in Mexico” (Smith), “The Contract Says: We’d Like the Conversation to be Bilingual” (Limon), “There are Birds Here” (May), “to Abuelita Neli” (Zamora)

Due: Reading response #12.

Th, Apr 28th Workshop Group B

Due: Feedback letters for Group B.

Week Fourteen: Leaving Here - Final Notes and Celebration Readings!!

T, May 3rd *Readings:* “Yourself Dancing: Doing the Actual Work” from *Rules of the Dance*, “The Talent of the Room” (Ventura)

Th, May 5th *Due:* Final portfolio due (Cover page + 12 Weekly Exercises + Revised Poem & Letter + Revised Short Story & Letter)