CRWRI-UA.815.002: Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry & Prose

Mondays & Wednesdays: 12:30 PM - 1:45 PM
Location: TBD
Instructor: Sara Elkamel
Email: se1321@nyu.edu

Course Overview: Poetry & Prose of Movement & Stasis
In this Introduction to Creative Writing class, we will explore craft elements in contemporary poetry and prose, while also generating, workshopping, and revising original creative writing. Specifically, we will explore works of poetry and prose (both fiction and nonfiction) through the lenses of motion and stasis. In the first half of our semester, we will focus on the poetry and prose of movement. We will read work where the body is on the move, and we will also examine how writers capture the mind in motion. All the while, we will concern ourselves with the types of narratives and literary techniques that emerge as writers tackle pilgrimage, travel, and perilous journeys (including those of the mind). In the second half of the semester, we will shift towards stasis: We will consider work that engages with incarceration, liminality, self-portraiture, dreams, and objects. Literary techniques we will explore will include: syntax, voice, point of view, tense, symbolism, mood, pacing, and description, among others.

Expectations
You will be expected to read a weekly packet of poems/prose that will guide our craft conversation. As participation in class discussions will be key, you will need to come to class prepared with thoughts and notes on various craft elements. This is also a writing class: You will get the opportunity to workshop your original work four times over the course of the semester. This means you'll be receiving feedback on your writing, as well as actively critiquing the work of your peers. At the end of the semester, you'll be asked to submit a portfolio of revised poems/stories. We will also hold a final class reading.

Structure: Craft Mondays & Workshop Wednesdays
On Craft Mondays, we will discuss assigned readings, in terms of the author’s chosen literary techniques, and our overall experience of the work. On most Mondays, we will also hold an in-class writing exercise, as a way to engage with the week’s readings and generate usable drafts. On Workshop Wednesdays, we will workshop your poems and stories (and “hybrid” pieces, if you choose to write those!). You will be placed in one of three workshop groups (A,B, or C), and will be required to submit your poem or story on Sunday 6 PM, before your group’s Workshop Wednesday.

Assignments
• Due Sunday (6 PM) before your group’s workshop week: Workshop poem/story.
  We will aim to workshop each student four times this semester: two poems, and two prose pieces (stories or nonfiction). You are expected to read your peers’ work before class, and come prepared for discussion.
• Due every Workshop Wednesday: Written peer critiques.
  You are required to write a short critique of each poem being workshopped every Wednesday, and give one copy to the author and one to me. Critiques should be approximately half a page, double spaced. On the first day of class, I will provide a Workshop Etiquette handout with suggestions on how to formulate your critique.
• Due February 24, March 31 & April 28: Monthly reading response.
  You are required to submit a monthly response to the readings, due on the last class in February, March, and April. This can be a critical or creative response; ideally you will present a mix of both response types over the course of the semester. You can also choose one reading to focus on, or compare various readings. This response should be between 2-4 pages.
• **Due March 17: Attend a literary event and write a response.**
  You are expected to attend a poetry or prose reading of your choice (online is fine), and write a response to the event. This can be in the form of a poem or a prose piece that engages with the work you heard, a letter to the poet, or a critical response to the reading.

• **Due April 14: Interview with a contemporary writer.**
  This is a chance for you to demonstrate your understanding of the craft elements we’ve discussed in class. You will be expected to contact a contemporary writer of your choice, and interview them (online is fine). You will submit an edited Q&A, with a brief introduction.

**Due on or before May 10: Portfolio of revised work.**
Please submit a portfolio of work you’ve written and revised this semester. You should include at least four poems and two stories.

**Grading**

• **Workshop & Peer Critiques: 25%**
  You will be graded on your performance in workshop. To achieve the highest grade, you will present your best work, meaningfully engage with your peers’ writing, and consistently write thoughtful and respectful peer critiques.

• **Written Assignments: 35%**
  You will be graded on the quality and rigour of your five written assignments, and on how well you demonstrate your takeaways from our craft discussions.

• **Attendance & Participation: 25%**
  Attendance is mandatory, and so is punctuality. If you have to miss class, please let me know ahead of time. Missing more than one class will affect your grade. You will achieve the best grade not merely for showing up, but also for contributing with passion and rigour.

• **Final Portfolio: 15%**
  This is your chance to shine. Revise your work until you’re proud of it. I am available to help with refining your drafts—please make sure you meet with me during office hours at least twice this semester, as this will also count towards your grade.

**Student Wellness Policy**

Unless we see 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, might seem to be a possible cry for help. Before submitting work that may be interpreted as such, please send an email putting the work in context. 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.

**NYU Wellness Center**
The Wellness Exchange is your mental health resource at NYU. Call the 24-hour hotline at (212) 443-9999, chat via the Wellness Exchange app anytime, make a virtual appointment, or "stop by" during virtual drop-in hours to speak with a certified counselor about any day-to-day challenges or health concerns. During business hours, email: wellness.exchange@nyu.edu

**Academic Integrity**

This course depends upon creative, original thoughts and insights. The university’s policy on plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this course. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the course and you will be reported to the CAS Associate Dean for Students.

**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. Website: http://www.nyu.edu/csd
#### Schedule: Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry & Prose (2/1 - 5/10)

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<tr>
<th>Craft Mondays</th>
<th>Workshop Wednesdays</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/1: Introductions, Syllabus, Workshop Etiquette</td>
<td>2/3: In-Class Exercise</td>
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<td><strong>Part One: Poetry &amp; Prose of Motion</strong></td>
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<td>2/8: [Embodyment] Adania Shibli</td>
<td>2/10: Group A</td>
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<td>2/15: [No Class]</td>
<td>2/17: Group B</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Monthly Reading Response</strong></td>
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<td>3/1: [Makeshift Pilgrimage] Hisham Matar</td>
<td>3/3: Group A</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Literary Event Response</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Part Two: Poetry &amp; Prose of Stasis</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Due: Monthly Reading Response</strong></td>
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<td>4/5: [Incarceration] Solmaz Sharif, Christopher Soto, Terrance Hayes</td>
<td>4/7: Group B</td>
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<td>4/12: [Self-Portraiture] Ocean Vuong, Marissa Davis, Yusef Komunyakaa, Angel Nafis</td>
<td>4/14: Group C</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Interview With Author</strong></td>
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<td>4/19: [No Class]</td>
<td>4/22: Group A</td>
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<td>4/26: [Self-Portraiture II] Etel Adnan, Kathy Acker, Alejandra Pizarnik</td>
<td>4/28: Group B</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Monthly Reading Response</strong></td>
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<td>5/3: [Dreams &amp; Objects] Toi Derricotte, Anne Sexton, Aracelis Grimay, Iman Mersal</td>
<td>5/5: Group C</td>
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<td>5/10: [Last Class] Final Reading Event</td>
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<td><strong>Due: Portfolio</strong></td>
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Readings
Unless otherwise indicated, reading packets will be provided as PDFs.

Part One: Poetry & Prose of Motion (1/25 - 3/10)
[Fiction] Adania Shibli, “Minor Detail” (Available at NYU Bookstore)
[Nonfiction] Hisham Matar, “A Month in Siena” (Available at NYU Bookstore)
[Fiction] Julio Cortazar, “Graffiti”
[Poetry] Carl Phillips, “As from a Quiver of Arrows”, and other poems
[Fiction] Zadie Smith, “Two Men Arrive in a Village”
[Novel in Verse] Ilya Kaminsky, “Deaf Republic” (Available at NYU Bookstore)

Part Two: Poetry & Prose of Stasis (3/22 - 5/10)
[Poetry] Naomi Shihab Nye, “Gate A-4”
[Poetry] Taha Muhammad Ali, “Meeting at an Airport”
[Poetry] Solmaz Sharif, “Reaching Guantanamo” (Series)
[Poetry] Christopher Soto, “Los Padrinos Juvenile Detention Center, Unit Y2”
[Poetry] Terrance Hayes, “I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison”
[Poetry] Ocean Vuong, “Someday I’ll Love Ocean Vuong”
[Poetry] Marissa Davis, “Psalm for the Unloved Body”
[Poetry] Angel Nafis, “Ghazal for Becoming Your Own Country”
[Nonfiction] Etel Adnan, “Shifting the Silence” [Excerpts]
[Poetry] Iman Mersal, “Oranges”
[Poetry] Toi Derricotte, “I Give in to an Old Desire”
[Poetry] Anne Sexton, “The Room of My Life”

Talk to me!
Please don’t hesitate to get in touch with questions, concerns, or ideas at any point.
You can reach me by email at se1321@nyu.edu