INTRO TO PROSE AND POETRY
SUMMER 2021 SESSION 2 (July 6 - August 16)
Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:30p-4:40p
CRWRI-UA.815.002
Instructor: Erin Townsend (et1733@nyu.edu)
Office Hours by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is an introductory course which assumes no prior experience with creative writing. We will explore fiction and poetry through a combination of craft discussions and student workshops. The goal of this course is to help students to identify and utilize literary techniques and to shed some light on the creative process as a whole. Students will gain valuable insights into their own writing processes, as well as gain experience in a collaborative workshop environment.

CLASS STRUCTURE

We will meet twice a week for 3-hour classes. The beginning of each class will be spent discussing the assigned readings and your reactions to them. Tuesdays will generally cover craft discussions and in-class exercises; Thursdays will be reserved for student workshops.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All of the assigned readings will be made available to you as links or PDFs. For each class, you will be expected to produce a list of 3-4 things from the assigned readings that you liked, disliked, or were otherwise moved by. These can be words/phrases, techniques, characters, structural choices, plot devices, or otherwise, and each should be justified by a couple of sentences as to why you chose it. These reactions need not be, in total, more than one page (Times New Roman, double spaced).

All assignments, including the list of likes/dislikes and feedback on student workshops, should be emailed to me by midnight on the day before class.

WORKSHOPS

Students will be workshopped twice during this course. Submissions can be fiction pieces up to 2000 words or 1-3 poems totalling no more than 6 pages; they will need to be submitted on the Tuesday before your assigned workshop date. Feedback on your classmates’ submissions will be due to the author (cc to me) by midnight before the workshop date.

Appropriate feedback includes a thoughtful and detailed mark-up of the submitted text and/or a separate reaction “letter;” we will discuss what constitutes constructive criticism and helpful feedback in class. In general, your work should always be a .docx or .pdf document in standard 12pt Times New Roman font and double spaced, except in the case of poetry where other
formats may be acceptable. Please title your submission, put your name at the top, and number the pages.

PLAGIARISM

Any instance of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be reported and may result in disciplinary measures. We will cover in class how and when an imitation of another writer’s technique may be acceptable.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at all classes is mandatory. Lateness of 15 minutes or more will count as an absence. More than one absence will drop your overall grade for the course a half-letter (A to A-, B+ to B to B-, etc.).

FINAL PROJECT/PORTFOLIO

Your final portfolio will be due to me by midnight Saturday, August 14. The portfolio will consist of revised versions of any workshop pieces you submitted throughout the semester, and it should be clear that your workshop feedback was taken into account. Any in-class exercises we do should also be included.

GRADING BREAKDOWN

1. Participation: 20% (includes attendance and engagement in class)
2. Assignments: 25% (includes 4 likes/dislikes assignment each class, as well as feedback on classmates’ workshop submissions)
3. Workshop submissions: 25%
4. Final portfolio: 30%

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

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, 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 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.

PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Week One: Beginnings, Endings, Middles

07/06
Introductions, syllabus review, workshop etiquette & sign-up
Readings: Halloween Party, Michael Chabon; Reunion, John Cheever

07/08
Workshop group 1
Readings: We Real Cool, Gwendolyn Brooks; The Golden Shovel, Terrance Hayes

Week Two: Character, Voice, POV

07/13
Craft talk
Readings: Girl, Jamaica Kincaid; My Son the Murderer, Bernard Malamud

07/15
Workshop group 2
Readings: Daddy, Sylvia Plath; Big Gay Ass Poem, BC Griffith

Week Three: Setting, Place, Image

07/20
Craft talk
Readings: The Mud Below, Annie Proulx; Ode to the Midwest, Kevin Young

07/22
Workshop group 3
Readings: The Shawl, Cynthia Ozick; The Church of the Open Crayon Box, Patricia Lockwood

Week Four: Plot, Scene, Storytelling
07/27
Craft talk
Readings: A Temporary Matter, Jhumpa Lahiri; Grace, Joy Harjo

07/29
Workshop group 1
Readings: Sibling Rivalry, Michael Byers; Ballad of the Harp Weaver, Edna St Vincent

**Week Five: Language, Style, Dialogue**

08/03
Craft talk
Readings: Hills like White Elephants, Ernest Hemmingway; Today Will Be a Quiet Day, Amy Hempel

08/05
Workshop group 2
Readings: Errata, Kevin Young; Duplex, Jericho Brown

**Week Six: Truth, Worldbuilding**

08/10
Craft talk
Readings: Jon, George Saunders; My God It’s Full of Stars, Tracy K. Smith

08/12
Workshop group 3
Readings: When I Grow Up I Want to Be a Further List of Possibilities, Chen Chen; How to Tell a True War Story, Tim O’Brien