Hybrid Genre, Hybrid Reality: Writing Together at a Time of Catastrophe

“In this moment of catastrophe, we are now being forced to radically rethink our interconnectedness, our porosity. Perhaps this is one silver lining in what feels so incredibly apocalyptic. I use this term in its etymological sense, which means to “uncover” as in to reveal, to make plain. Our interconnectedness is not an idea that is old, but one that has been covered over, thrown, metaphorically, in the waters of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Hades.”

— “The Quarantine Files: Thinkers in Isolation,” George Yancy

During this time of collective uncertainty, we will create a space to write together. We will read recent works by writers processing their experiences on the page, and ask the hard questions: How does one write, create, imagine during this time? How do we transform the writing workshop into a space for gathering, holding, togetherness?

We will engage with interdisciplinary online spaces such as “The Tenderness Project” and “Quarandreams,” and look at a variety of hybrid works that break and expand the genre conventions of fiction, poetry, nonfiction. We will experiment with the ways we, as writers, move in between genre and form as we write.

Through discussions of craft and readings, we will write towards a space of trust—both in our voice and in the attention we give to each other’s work. In addition to weekly critical and creative writing exercises, we will workshop six pieces and create a final portfolio of critical responses and short works.
Writing is a practice of *dailiness*. I will ask you to keep a journal: be it a Dream journal, an Instagram diary, or a few observations on Notes. Since we will be meeting online, this will allow us to bring writing into our daily lives.

**READINGS/ RESOURCES:**
- Pandemic Files, *The Yale Review*
- The Tenderness Project
- All readings will be available on NYU Classes

**COURSE STRUCTURE:**
Each class session will be divided into craft, workshop, and writing exercises:

**Craft:**
Critical responses are due on the class discussion thread on NYU Classes by ___ before class. Responses may vary in lengths but should be more than 200 words and engage thoughtfully with the assigned reading. Quoting from the reading will help ground your responses—please cite your quotes: (author, page number). You should also incorporate a response to another student’s post in your response.

**Workshop:**
You are expected to have read everyone’s pieces with care before class and write a “letter to the writer” about each piece with your feedback and edits. What was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work? Try to stay away from positive or negative value judgments such as what you liked or what was good; instead, focus on *why* something was working or resonated with you in the piece. Please bring 2 copies of your “letter to the writer”—one for the writer and one for me—to each workshop.

**OFFICE HOURS**
Sign up on Google Doc.
GRADING

Attendance and participation 20%
Active classroom participation and careful, attentive engagement with each other’s work. Give the care to another’s work that you would like your own work to receive.

Presentation/ discussion 10%
Each student will sign up to present on a reading. Presentations should be 10-15 min long and can cover any aspect of the reading. They will lead a discussion afterwards.

Reading responses 15%
Reading responses should be posted by midnight before Thursday’s craft class and demonstrate thoughtful and rigorous engagement with the readings and other student responses. I will grade them on a scale of 0 to 3, where 0 is unsatisfactory, 1 is minimally satisfactory, 2 is satisfactory, and 3 is positively gratifying.

Workshop submissions 20%
___ copies of your piece for workshop need to be passed out on Thursday’s class. Any late submission will go down a letter grade.

Letters to the writer 10%
Along with edits written down on the writer’s workshopped piece, you should bring two copies of a “letter to the writer” to be handed back to me and the writer. In your letter, write about the ways you understood and resonated with the piece—remember to reflect on how the writer can edit their own piece in accordance with their vision or voice, rather than how you would edit their piece.

Final portfolio 25%
Your final portfolio will consist of six pieces from workshops and/or writing exercises—you can choose the balance of genres. The pieces should be radically revised/ revisited/ reimagined. Use a reasonable font (unless a unique font is
fundamental to your piece), include page numbers, a title page, and a writer’s bibliography referencing the works that have inspired you.

POLICIES
1. Attendance: Arriving more than 15 minutes late to class is considered an unexcused absence. More than two unexcused absences will lower your final grade by one mark (A becomes A-, B+ becomes B, and so on). If you miss your own workshop, your workshop submission will be automatically counted as “missing,” which is the equivalent of “F.”

2. Plagiarism: Any academic dishonesty will be reported to the department and lead to a failing grade in this class.

3. Electronics: Laptops, phones, and any other non-medical electronic devices should be turned off and put away before class. I expect all electronic resources to be printed out before class.

4. Food: Since we meet late in the day, food is permitted (& sharing is encouraged). Please do not bring any foods that may be disruptive to the class.

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
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.

WEEK ONE

T 5/26
Introduction
Begin journals (Melissa Lozada Oliva’s dream zine, “Quarandreams”)
Bring to class: two pieces that are important to you: one written by you, and one not (bring ___ copies of each)

TH 5/28
“Practice Imagining Change: A workshop manifesto,” Helen Betya Rubinstein
Writing exercises & mock workshop

WEEK TWO

T 6/2
The House on Mango Street, “A House of My Own,” Sandra Cisneros
Due: Primal stories. In class primal stories exercise.

TH 6/4
A Pillow Book, Suzanne Buffam

Workshop

**Week Three**

T 6/9

“A Letter to My Mother that She Will Never Read,” Ocean Vuong
Poems by Ocean Vuong, Bhanu Kapil, Terrance Hayes

TH 6/11

Workshop

Poems by Ross Gay, Jericho Brown, Paul Celan

**Week Four**

T 6/16

“Girl,” Jamaica Kincaid
“Tell It Slant” C Pam Zhang
“The Green Ribbon” Carmen Maria Machado
Selections of Lydia Davis

TH 6/18

Pandemic Files
Workshop

**Week Five**

T 6/23

Tenderness Project
In class guest: Amir Denzel Hall

TH 6/25

Collaborations Workshop

**Week Six**
T 6/30

_The Year of Blue Water, Yanyi_

Share journals

TH 7/2

Reading! (On Zoom: Invite your friends & family to celebrate!)