Information

INTRO Creative Writing courses are free, non-credit creative writing workshops taught by current MFA Creative Writing students in the Graduate Writing Program. They are designed to facilitate discussions regarding works in each of the major genres, and provide a space for critical feedback on student work.

These courses are open to all current Columbia and Barnard students, affiliates, and all School of the Arts alumni.

Classes will take place, weekly, from March 14th, 2016 – April 15th, 2016

How to Register:

You may register for up to three (3) INTRO Creative Writing courses a semester.

Please visit: https://fs30.formsite.com/writingcats/form2/index.html to choose your classes.

If you have any further questions please email the current INTRO Coordinator at: writingcats@gmail.com
List of Courses

Fiction Workshops

**Virgin, Witch, Crone**
Sunday, 2:00-4:00PM
Dodge 407

**Very Short Stories**
Friday, 11:30-1:30PM
Dodge 407

**The Laboratory of the Page**
Friday, 9:00-11:00AM
Dodge 407

**Crafting a Story**
Saturday, 4:30-6:30PM
Dodge 407

Non-Fiction Workshops

**From Pitch to Page**
Thursday, 5:30-7:30PM
Dodge 407

Poetry Workshops

**12 Poems You Haven’t Read Yet**
Friday 4:30-6:30PM
Dodge 407

Cross-Genre Workshops

**From Quarry to Page**
Saturday, 11:30-1:30PM
Dodge 407

**Speaking on the Page**
Sunday, 11:30-1:30PM
Dodge 407

**Storytelling**
Friday, 2:00-4:00PM
Dodge 407

**The Open Eye**
Thursday 9:00-10:30 AM
Dodge 411

**The Artist’s Responsibility**
Thursday, 7:45-8:45PM
Dodge 407

**Taking Your Voice for a Walk**
Saturday, 2:00-4:00PM
Dodge 407
Course descriptions

**Virgin, Witch, Crone**  
Instructor: Courtney Campbell

Course Description:

Maybe you’re a woman writer. Maybe you write women. In service of our own writing, we will examine closely how writers use and reject notions of femininity to create female characters. We’ll explore the work of writers whose female characters transcend the tropes of virgin, of witch, of crone. We’ll focus on the characterization of atypical women in classic and modern literature by reading short stories and novel excerpts in class. We’ll pay special attention to voice. A final creative piece will challenge or incorporate our ideas of how to depict the complexity of a woman’s life on the page.

**Very Short Stories: Nontraditional Storytelling Strategies**  
Instructor: Jenessa Abrams

Course Description:

What constitutes a story? Does a story need to have a delineated beginning, middle and end? Does it need to reach a certain page length? This course aims to examine the many different definitions of storytelling through the medium of short prose. We will study selections from Lydia Davis, Etgar Keret, Augusto Monterroso, and Claudia Rankine, among others, to unpack techniques we can use to craft our own very short stories. We will focus our attention on texts that feature compression and unorthodox manners of construction that subvert conventional narratives. We will have the opportunity to read many of the assigned pieces aloud and will conduct in-class writing exercises imitating their styles. Students will be encouraged to share their exercises and are welcome to revise their writing at home. Several classes will feature an optional workshop where we will closely examine our own short prose, inspired by the readings.

**The Laboratory of the Page**  
Instructor: Nancy Brown

Course Description:

Poets have long exploited the space of the page, but we prose writers often blunder through without a thought to page layout, paragraph breaks and page breaks. These, in fact, have the power to connect and disconnect, highlight and underplay ideas and images, and give the text a feeling of density or spaciousness. This class will be a lab in which we experiment with these elements and observe the effects. Our guinea pigs will include Edouard Leve, Mary Robison, Samuel Beckett, Mary Ruefle, and others. Students may also submit their own texts.

**Crafting a Story: An Introductory Course**  
Instructor: Supipi Weerasooriya

Course Description:

We have all read stories that stay with us long after we have put the pages down. Our favorite authors make deliberate narrative choices to form seamless, intricate tales. The growing writer can learn and apply these techniques, in constructing their own rich and complex narratives.
In this course we will look at some important technical elements that are available to writers. As a class, we will look closely at how different writers employ plot, voice, structure and style, and examine how these authorial choices have shaped their stories. Writers we read will include Margaret Atwood, Jamaica Kincaid, Chinua Achebe, Virginia Woolf and Michael Cunningham. At the end of the course, students would have developed skills that they can apply to their own work.

There will be in-class readings, short, in-class writing assignments and an opportunity for students to workshop their stories.

**From Pitch to Page: Crafting True Reported Stories**  
**Instructor:** Suzanne Sataline

Course Description:

Features are works of journalism that stand out from news for their creativity, structure and deft language. They are a form that allows a writer to hone skills needed for longer, more complex nonfiction writing. Features can be funny, wistful, sad, even shocking. Sometimes they’re driven by something in the news. Other times they have no news at all. The best examples are stories, with beginnings, middles and ends, containing characters that transport the reader – emotionally, intellectually, maybe philosophically. They are well researched and always 100 percent true.

The class will discuss the hallmarks of features, how they differ from hard news stories, and how newspaper features resemble and differ from those in magazines. We’ll discuss profiles and narratives, and learn how thorough reporting, and deploying certain elements (theme, character) can produce true tales that inform and entertain. The class will examine many articles by professional writers and discuss how to pitch ideas to editors. Most of all, the course will help students develop the mindset of feature hunters.

**12 Poems You May Not Know**  
**Instructor:** Claire Sibley

Course Description:

In this class, we will be using twelve recent poems to expand conceptions about what a poem is. We will be using these poems to ask: What can a poem do to a reader? How does this happen? In order to do this, we will read not only as readers, but as writers reading. Along the way, students will acquire and hone the skills to discuss poems and to make their own work. Activities will include in-class readings and discussion, take-home writing assignments, and some workshop of student work. All texts will be provided.

**From Quarry to Page: Mining for Material**  
**Instructor:** Erika Luckert

Course Description:

There is no such thing as writer’s block—there are only blocks of writing. So where do we find blocks of writing to carve? Each class will be devoted to a different source of material that we can write from. We’ll experiment with ways to be in conversation with the work of other authors we admire, envy, even fear. We’ll develop techniques to pull words from a painting or sculpture. We’ll uncover material in the archive or the attic, and bring the past into our present writing. We’ll even carve writing out of the city itself. This is a cross-genre course, so students are invited to develop the material they find into poetry, prose, or something entirely
other. There will be time to discuss readings, to find new blocks of writing, to carve them in class with our words, and to share our work.

**Speaking on the Page**  
Instructor: Callan Stout

Course Description:

A memoir author recalls advice they received; a journalist quotes a source; an omniscient narrator includes a conversation between two characters. All of these are instances of spoken language being represented in a written work. While often denoted between quotation marks, spoken language can take on many forms. This class will explore and interrogate the form, function and use of spoken language in works of drama, fiction, memoir, and transcripts. Ultimately we will ask “why spoken language for this moment?” for each example we read and analyze. This class will also include an aspect of craft, we will experiment with how dialogue and spoken words are used differently in each written form, by creating original work or rewriting existing text into a different form. Participants need not consider themselves writers. Everyone will be encouraged to take off their headphones while going about their daily lives and listen to the people speaking around them.

**Storytelling**  
Instructor: Cai Voice

Course Description:

We are visual creatures; however, when recreating sensory experiences with writing, it is difficult to show, not tell.

In the first half of this course, we will learn the basics of screenplay form—a form inherently meant to show rather than tell—in order to develop strategies for cutting the ‘telling’ out of storytelling. The prose writer’s blank page is virtually limitless in comparison to the screenwriter’s. Because screenwriters have to comply with the time and production restrictions of filmic mediums, screenplay form naturally has to adhere to certain conventions. If we look at prose writing as a limitless palette, learning the primary rules of screenwriting can help shape the prose writer’s decision-making process when faced with seemingly endless possibilities.

Throughout the class, we will discuss how excerpts of fiction and narrative non-fiction such as memoir and biography succeed or fail to create lucid images; in addition, we study excerpts from novels that have been adapted to film, from prose to screenplay, to clip, in order to hone techniques for trimming down expository language. In the latter half of the course, students will translate a piece of their own writing into screenplay form, and then write a revised draft of the same piece, drawing from class exercises to achieve a more vivid, cinematic quality with their work.

**The Open Eye**  
Instructor: Maximiliane Donicht

Course Description:

“Open-eyed, Rainer Maria Rilke died in the arms of his doctor on December 29, 1926.”  
- from William H. Gass’ “Reading Rilke: Reflections on the Problems of Translation”

“The Open,” a poetical and philosophical term first coined by Rainer Maria Rilke in his Duino Elegies, refers to the mystical “beyond” that informs spirituality, the supernatural, religion, and, of course, poetry! In the
Elegies, Rilke observes the internal and external world of humans and other beings, their interactions with and place in the conceivable world, as well as in the inconceivable world beyond death; In other words, he explores what being means. Rilke himself explained it as follows:

“By the ‘Open,’ therefore, I do not mean sky, air, and space; they too are ‘object’ and thus ‘opaque’ and closed to the judgmental observer. The animal, the flower, presumably is all that without accounting to itself, and therefore, has before itself that indescribably open freedom.” – from a letter to Lev P. Struve, 1926.

Is The Open something we had access to as children, but were forced to unlearn? Is mankind’s constant, compulsive need to define, primarily through language, a subconscious outcome of this growing distance to the realm of The Open? And do language and critical thinking aid us in retrieving it, or do they, in fact, stand in our way?

We will consider different interpretations of The Open and reflect on its connections to physics, neuroscience, religion, ancient Chinese philosophy, and the writing process. There will be an opportunity for students to workshop a poem written for this course if they wish.

Readings will include:
Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*
Ancient Chinese poetry
A. R. Ammons
Franz Wright
Marie Hower
M. S. Merwin
Stephen Dobyns
Jenny Yates Hammet, “Thinker and Poet: Heidegger, Rilke and Death”
Sondra Perl, “Understanding Composing”

**The Artist’s Responsibility**
Instructors: Corey Page Spencer and Nicholas Goodley

**Course Description:**

“The precise role of the artist, then, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through the vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place.”

–James Baldwin

“Nor did Ginsberg explain why he changed ‘negro fix’ to ‘angry fix’…”

–Jonah Raskin

*American Scream*

This is an experimental class that will serve as a forum to explore the connection between the artist’s creative process and an their relationship to society. We will look at and discuss creative texts, both canonical and contemporary, highlighted by sociological and philosophical theses, that illuminate and perhaps challenge the artist’s role as a harbinger of change, critique of power, and voice for the unvoiced.

We will ask ourselves hard questions about the artists “freedom of imagination.” Our primary objective will be to establish an atmosphere conducive to open conversations about issues surrounding race, political correctness, social sensitivity, identity awareness, though policing, sexuality, white supremacy, hetero-normativity, and misogyny as they appear through the artist’s process and work. We will seek to uncover how and why the word “responsibility” should (or should not) apply to writers and artists. We will traverse the work of writers in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction who may be considered by some readers and critics as radical, political,
experimental or offensive, which will offer us a useful frame to think about these issues. We will write in tandem with these writers.

“This class will require unusual levels of respect, optimism, vulnerability, and compassion from all its participants.

**Taking Your Voice for a Walk**
Instructor: Emily Skillings

“I like to think of moving through the sentence (as writer or reader) as moving through a kind of terrain. The sentence is at once a map of where we have gone and where we wish to go” –Renee Gladman

This is an introductory creative writing class that traces, through reading, mapping, and guided prompts, the effects of walking on the written line. This 5 session class will examine the flaneuristic impulse from Baudelaire and Robert Walser to such contemporary poets and prose writers as Eileen Myels, A.R. Ammons, Brenda Coultas and Renee Gladman. We will create poems and short prose together, focusing on how the body moving through space can gather and collect information and images to create a versatile, mobile voice.