SPRING 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTION

All students are eligible for seminars and beginning workshops, though space is limited. If the class is full, add your name to the SSOL waitlist and attend the first day. **Students may take only one workshop per semester and two seminars per semester.** Intermediate, advanced & senior workshops require a writing sample. Please visit our 609 Kent office or our website at http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN1100  Beginning Fiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in fiction is designed for students who have little or no previous experience writing literary texts in fiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through creative exercises and discussions, and eventually produce their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. The focus of the course is on the rudiments of voice, character, setting, point of view, plot, and the lyrical use of language. Students will begin to develop the critical skills that will allow them to read like writers and understand, on a technical level, how accomplished creative writing is produced. Outside readings of a wide range of fiction supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

*Instructors*
Sec 01  Arielle Braverman
Sec 02  Nancy Brown
Sec 03  Sam Clegg
Sec 04  Ryan Meehan

WRIT UN1200  Beginning Nonfiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with little or no experience in writing literary nonfiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through exercises and discussions, and they eventually submit their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

*Instructors*
Sec 01  Amelia Blanquera
Sec 02  Kristi DiLallo

WRIT UN1300  Beginning Poetry Workshop

The beginning poetry workshop is designed for students who have a serious interest in poetry writing but who lack a significant background in the rudiments of the craft and/or have had little or no previous poetry workshop experience. Students will be assigned weekly writing exercises emphasizing such aspects of verse composition as the poetic line, the image, rhyme and other sound devices, verse forms, repetition, tone, irony, and others. Students will also read an extensive variety of exemplary work in verse, submit brief critical analyses of poems, and critique each other's original work.

*Instructor*
Sec 01  Emily Skillings
INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN2100 Intermediate Fiction Workshop
Intermediate workshops are for students with some experience with creative writing, and whose prior work merits admission to the class (as judged by the professor). Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops, and increased expectations to produce finished work. By the end of the semester, each student will have produced at least seventy pages of original fiction. Students are additionally expected to write extensive critiques of the work of their peers.

Instructors
Sec 01 Alexandra Kleeman
Sec 02 Samuel Graham-Felsen

WRIT UN2200 Intermediate Nonfiction Workshop
The intermediate workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with some experience in writing literary nonfiction. Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops and an expectation that students will produce finished work. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects. By the end of the semester, students will have produced thirty to forty pages of original work in at least two traditions of literary nonfiction.

Instructor
Sec 01 Elizabeth Greenwood

WRIT UN2300 Intermediate Poetry Workshop
Intermediate poetry workshops are for students with some prior instruction in the rudiments of poetry writing and prior poetry workshop experience. Intermediate poetry workshops pose greater challenges to students and maintain higher critical standards than beginning workshops. Students will be instructed in more complex aspects of the craft, including the poetic persona, the prose poem, the collage, open-field composition, and others. They will also be assigned more challenging verse forms such as the villanelle and also non-European verse forms such as the pantoum. They will read extensively, submit brief critical analyses, and put their instruction into regular practice by composing original work that will be critiqued by their peers. By the end of the semester each student will have assembled a substantial portfolio of finished work.

Instructor
Sec 01 Carey McHugh

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN3100 Advanced Fiction Workshop
Building on the work of the Intermediate Workshop, Advanced Workshops are reserved for the most accomplished creative writing students. A significant body of writing must be produced and revised. Particular attention will be paid to the components of fiction: voice, perspective, characterization, and form. Students will be expected to finish several short stories, executing a total artistic vision on a piece of writing. The critical focus of the class will include an examination of endings and formal wholeness, sustaining narrative arcs, compelling a reader's interest for the duration of the text, and generating a sense of urgency and drama in the work.

Instructors
Sec 01 Rebecca Curtis
Sec 02 Ru Freeman
SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN3101 Senior Fiction Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

Instructor
Sec 01 Porochista Khakpour

WRIT UN3201 Senior Nonfiction Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

Instructor
Section 01 Alexander Abramovich

WRIT UN3301 Senior Poetry Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

Instructor
Section 01 Dorothea “Dottie” Lasky

SEMINARS

WRIT UN3111 Exercises in Style

Raymond Queneau, in his book Exercises in Style, demonstrated that a single story, however unassuming, could be told at least ninety-nine different ways. Even though the content never changed, the mood always did: aggressive, mild, indifferent, lyrical, sensitive, technical, indirect, deceitful. This course for writers will look at a wide range of prose styles, from conspicuous to subtle ones. We will not only read examples of obviously stylistic prose, but consider as well how the reigning prose norms are themselves stylistic bulwarks, entrenched in the culture for various reasons that might interest us. We will read a variety of writers, from Ernest Hemingway to Renata Adler to Cormac McCarthy to Alice Munro, and more. Writing exercises, vigorous in-class discussion will be required.

Instructor
Ann DeWitt

WRIT UN3112 The First Person

Today, in the age of memoir, we don't need to apologize for speaking in the first person, but we still need to find a way to make a first person, fictional narrative forceful and focused. The logic is different, the danger the same: we must find a form that will shape an "I" account and render it rhetorically compelling,
giving it the substance and complexity of literary art. In this craft seminar, we will begin by reading critical background about the early uses of first-person in fiction. We will study how these functioned in the societies they commented on, and chart the changing use of first person in western literature from the eighteenth century to today. Through reading contemporary novels, stories and novellas, we will analyze first person in its various guises: the "I" as witness (reliable or not), as elegist, outsider, interpreter, diarist, apologist, and portraitist. Towards the end of the semester we will study more unusual forms: first-person plural, first-person omniscient, first-person rotating. We will supplement our reading with craft-oriented observations by master-writers. Students will complete four to five fiction pieces of their own in which they will implement specific approaches to first person. At least two of these will be complete stories; others may be the beginning of a novel or novella or floating scenes. Students will confer several times with the instructor to discuss their work.

**Instructor**
Sam Lipsyte

**WRIT UN3114 Eccentrics & Outsiders**

This course will focus on literature narrated by characters who have become unhinged from the norms of society. They may stand apart from the mainstream because of willful eccentricity, madness, even social disgrace, but in each case their alienation provides them with a unique perspective, one that allows the reader to see the world they describe without the dulling lens of convention. We will explore what authors might gain by narrating their works from an "outsider" viewpoint as well as study how the peculiar form and structure of these books reflects the modernist impulse in literature. This is a seminar designed for fiction writers so we will spend time talking about not only the artistic merits of these books, but also how the authors achieve their specific effects. Over the course of the semester, we will use these texts as a springboard for writing original fiction.

**Instructor**
JW McCormack

**WRIT UN3118 First Novels: How They Work**

First Novels exist as a distinct category, in part, because all novelists must write one. They may never write a second, but in order to be called novelists there always has to be a first. As a result the first novel is a very special animal. Every kind of writer must attempt one and despite vast differences in genre or style there are often many similarities between them. In fact one of the surest similarities are the flaws in each book. Before each writer becomes expert at his or her method, his or her style, there is room for experimentation and unsuccessful attempts. These “failures” are often much more illuminating for students than the successes of later books. First novels contain the energy of youth, but often lack the precision that comes with maturity. By examining a series of first novels students will learn to identify common craft elements of first novels and how to employ them to great effect in their own writing.

**Instructor**
Emily Gould

**WRIT UN3214 Hybrid Nonfiction Forms**

Creative nonfiction is a frustratingly vague term. How do we give it real literary meaning; examine its compositional aims and techniques, its achievements and especially its aspirations? This course will focus on works that we might call visionary – works that combine art forms, genres and styles in striking ways. Works in which image and text combine to create a third interactive language for the reader. Works still termed “fiction” “history” or “journalism” that join fact and fiction to interrogate their uses and implications. Certain memoirs that are deliberately anti-autobiographical, turning from personal narrative to the sounds, sight, impressions and ideas of the writer’s milieu. Certain essays that join personal reflection to arts and cultural criticism, drawing on research and imagination, the vernacular and
the formal, even prose and poetry. The assemblage or collage that, created from notebook entries, lists, quotations, footnotes and indexes achieves its coherence through fragments and associations, found and original texts.

Instructor
Sec 01  Margo Jefferson

WRIT UN3215 Learning to See: Writing the Visual

It was through seriously meditating on the paintings and sculptures of Cezanne and Rodin that Rilke learned to see, as he phrased it, and radicalized his literary vision. In this seminar, we will look seriously at the object, and think through the forms, processes, and lives of artists as model and inspiration for our own nonfiction pieces. The writers we will be reading play with genre, style, form, and voice in innovative ways, like the art and artists they are writing to, occasionally using images in their texts or turning their own books and essays into art objects and playful experiments. An indefinite list of these writers: W.G. Sebald, Claudia Rankine, Janet Malcolm, Douglas Martin, Roland Barthes, Hervé Guibert, Anne Carson, Sophie Calle, T. Fleischmann, Chris Kraus, Tisa Bryant, Bruce Hainley, Susan Sontag, Bhanu Kapil, Lisa Robertson, Ariana Reines, Wayne Koestenbaum, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and others. The class aims to stimulate and inspire your own practice, through reading and seeing, critically and ecstatically. You will be writing midterm and final critical responses, as well as submitting creative texts every week that respond to the reading culminating in a final literary work that will be an extension of one of your shorter imitative pieces.

Instructor
Sec 01  Kate Zambreno

WRIT UN3218 Gonzo Journalism

“Gonzo” journalism, that oft-maligned offshoot of the New Journalism, is more than a put-on, a getup, a late-adolescent Halloween costume. It is the aggressively subjective, wildly literary, picaresque, iconoclastic, funny-as-hell rejoinder to traditional nonfiction and its false gods, detachment and neutrality. Gonzo is essential, and very much alive, and, in fact, everywhere now. In this seminar, we will delve deeply into Gonzo -- its roots, its ascendancy, its flowering and subsequent stagnation, and its death...and its resurrection, its transfiguration, its dispersal, and its implications. We will deconstruct the methodologies, philosophies, and personas of Gonzo, and we will apply what we learn to our own writing. We will ape and play and experiment, all while expanding our notion of “nonfiction.”

This class aims to rejigger your conception as to what a reporter/observer is, and to whom or what your fealty should be pledged. We will free ourselves from factitiousness; we will turn ourselves on to those truths that remain un-self-evident to the pinched and officious evidence-talliers of the world. We will come to understand that our burden and joy as writers is to “cover the story,” whatever that might entail.

Evaluation will be based on class participation, response papers, two longer pieces, as well as a polished, ambitious final draft.

Instructor
Sec 01  Kent Russell

WRIT UN2311 Traditions in Poetry

"Any fool can get into an ocean/ But it takes a Goddess/ To get out of one." --Jack Spicer

Lyric poetry in contemporary practice continues to draw upon and modify its ancient sources, as well as Renaissance, Romantic and Modernist traditions. In this seminar, we will explore the creation of the voice of the poem, the wild lyrical I, through closely reading female poets from antiquity to present day, beginning with Anne Carson’s translations of Sappho, If Not Winter, all the way up to present avatars and noted stylists such as Mary Jo Bang (Elegy), Tracy K. Smith (Life on Mars), Bernadette Mayer (New
Directions Reader), Eileen Myles (Not Me), Maggie Nelson (Bluets) and others. The identity of the poetic speaker remains a tension of revelation and concealment, the inescapable ties to memory and experience as one mode of the lyric, the dramatic tropes of mask and persona as another, though not a necessarily contradictory tendency. Students will be asked to hear a range of current and classic women poets deploying, constructing and annihilating the self: the sonnets of Queen Elizabeth and the American beginnings of Anne Bradstreet; the emergence in the 19th century of iconic and radicalizing female presences: Emily Bronte, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning; and the predominance of 20th century masters who re-invented the English-language lyric as much as they inherited: Louise Bogan, Gwendolyn Brooks, H.D., Marianne Moore, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Laura Riding, and Gertrude Stein.

As background, students will read prose works (epistolary writing, journals and diaries, classic essays as well as prose poetry), which may contextualize women’s desire and its reception in public and private space: the religious mysticism of Sor Juana and Catherine di Sienna, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, Emily Dickinson’s letters, and select passages from Virginia Woolf’s criticism and novels. Students will be expected to keep their own reading diary or write letters in response to class readings, as well as select a classic and contemporary female poet for semester-long research. Additional course handouts will be organized by particular groupings of interest to our study of desire & identity, voice & witness: Confessional poetry (Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton), Cave Canem poets (Harryette Mullen and Natasha Trethewey), New York School (Alice Notley and Hannah Weiner), as well as additional contemporary poets (Lynn Melnick and Matthea Harvey).

Instructor
Sec 01 Camille Rankine

WRIT UN3316 West To East

This course examines two central movements in post World War II American poetry, The San Francisco Renaissance and The New York School, and uncovers their aesthetic impacts on language and cultural production, as well as their relationship to “the city” as a defining agent in the poetic imagination. We will use this living term of “the city” in both of these coastal iterations as a way to guide our discussions and the genesis of new poetry written under the themes of the course. Beginning with the Berkeley poets of the 1940s (Kenneth Rexroth, Madeline Gleason, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, and others) and extending to the 1960s poetry scene in Manhattan (John Ashbery, Frank O’Hara, Barbara Guest, James Schuyler, and others), we will examine how these movements intersect with the Beats, the Abstract Expressionist painters, the Black Mountain poets, and the countercultural attitudes and forces beginning to take shape in America between World War II and the Vietnam War. We will also study how the geographic regions of the west and east coasts have given rise to specific sensibilities in American poetry that continue to be meaningful and influential today. Finally, we will use these sensibilities as inspiration for our own creative work, with culminating projects in the course including a manuscript of new poems and a smaller critical essay delving into course themes.

Instructor
Sec 01 Alexander Dimitrov

WRIT UN3010 Short Prose Forms

The prose poem and its siblings the short short story and the brief personal essay are the wild cards in the writer’s deck; their identities change according to the dealer. We will consider a wide range of forms, approaches, and styles, spanning centuries. In addition to works in English, we will read translations from the French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese. Seminar discussions will be complemented by frequent writing exercises (inside and outside of class) and some abbreviated workshopping of student pieces. Each student will make one brief classroom presentation.

Instructor
Sec 01 Alan Ziegler
WRIT UN3011 Lost (and Found) in Literary Translation: Introduction to Theories and Practice

You don't have to be bilingual to take this course. Several years of study of another language is enough.

This course is designed to introduce students to the art of literary translation and to encourage them to investigate ways in which translation can impact them as readers and writers. Together we will explore broad-ranging questions pertaining to the linguistic, cultural, and socio-political significance of translation while analyzing the various challenges confronted by the art’s foremost practitioners. This course will pose questions about the role of the translator and what it means to interpret, capture, and transmit meaning from one language to another. We will read and discuss texts by writers and theorists alike, including works by Benjamin, Derrida, Borges, Steiner, Nabokov, Schleiermacher, Goethe, Spivak, Jakobson, Venuti, Bernofsky, and Murakami, as well as essays by various contemporary translators as a way of exposing ourselves to a range of perspectives on translation. We will also read comparatively multiple translations of a single text. As readers and practitioners of translation, we will train our ears to detect the visibility or invisibility of the translator's craft. Through short writing experiments, we will discover how to identify and capture the nuances that traverse literary styles, historical periods and cultures. We will also discuss the recent upsurge in the publishing industry's interest in literature in translation and what this may say about our current literary epoch. The course will culminate in a final project to be developed with the instructor that may be a critical analysis, an original translation accompanied by a translator's note of introduction, or a creative project applying “translation thinking” to other art forms.

Instructor
Elianna Kan

WRIT UN3015 Daily Life

In his poem “A Few Days,” James Schuyler reflects: “A few days / are all we have. So count them as they pass. They pass too quickly / out of breath.” Before we know it, as Schuyler says, “Today is tomorrow.” This course will encourage us to slow down time and document today while it is still today. One of the course’s main points is to pursue the ordinary, and to recognize that the ordinary – whether presented as poems, essays, stories, fragments, etc. – can become art. Assignments will provide broad examples of how to portray dailiness. Each week you will write a short piece (1-3 pages) that responds to these assignments while engaging your own daily life. The form is open. You could, for example, write a poem or story with a brief critical preface, or you could compose an essay that explores formal and/or thematic qualities. You can also create multimedia work. The important thing is to treat the materials we will read as springboards into your own artistic practice.

Instructor
Sec 01 Jon Cotner

WRIT GU4013 Writing The War

What, how, and to what ends have we written creatively about war and violence? How have literary ideas of genre and point of view and voice as well as cultural ideas of gender and nation and citizenship been shaped and challenged by writing about war, violence, and/or trauma? This course considers a range of genres--poetry, fiction and plays--from a range of perspectives--veterans, victims of war crimes and other forms of violence and trauma, anti-war activists, children of war and domestic violence survivors--within the capacious category of war literature.

Instructor
Sec 01 Deborah Paredez