SPRING 2016 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](http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate) for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

**WRIT W1001 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 Olaya Barr
Sec 02 Hayden Bennett
Sec 03 Katrine Jensen
Sec 04 Andrew Waldron

**WRIT W1101 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 Julia Bosson
Sec 02 Sophia Unterman

**WRIT W1201 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 Chukwuma Ndulue
INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT W2001 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 Ellis Avery
Sec 02 Mitchell Jackson

WRIT W2101 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 Kent Russell

WRIT W2201 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 Emily Pettit

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT W3001 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 Victor LaValle
Sec 02 Marie Myung Ok Lee
SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT W3697 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 Heidi Julavits

WRIT W3798 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 Michelle Orange

WRIT W3898 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 Marni Ludwig

SEMINARS

WRIT W3294 The Craft of Writing Dialogue
Whether texting, chatting, conversing, speechifying, recounting, confiding, gossipping, tweeting, praying, interviewing, exhorting, pitching, scheming, lecturing, nagging or begging, humans love to talk, and readers love narratives that contain dialogue. Good dialogue makes characters and scenes feel real and alive. Great dialogue reveals characters’ fears, desires and quirks, forwards the narrative’s plot and dramatic tension, and it often contains subtext. In this course, we’ll read different kinds of novels and stories—from noir to horror to sci-fi to realistic drama to comic romp—that implement various types of dialogue effectively, and we’ll study how they do it. We’ll read essays by masters that explain techniques for writing great dialogue, and we’ll practice writing different styles of dialogue ourselves. Coursework will consist of reading, in-class exercises, and two short creative assignments.

Instructor
Sec 01 Rebecca Curtis
WRIT W3296  How To Build A Person

Character is something that good fiction supposedly cannot do without. But what is a character, and what constitutes a supposedly good or believable one? Should characters be like people we know, and if so, how exactly do we create written versions of people? This class will examine characters in all sorts of writing, historical and contemporary, with an eye toward understanding just how characters are created in fiction, and how they come to seem real to us. We'll read stories and novels; we may also look at essays and biographical writing to analyze where the traces of personhood reside. We'll also explore the way in which these same techniques of writing allow us to personify entities that lack traditional personhood, such as animals, computers, and other unhuman characters. Does personhood precede narrative, or is it something we bestow on others by allowing them to tell their story, or telling a story of our own creation on their behalf? Weekly critical and creative exercises will intersect with and expand on the readings and discussions.

Instructor
Sec 01  Alexandra Kleeman

WRIT W3302  Approaches to the Short Story

The modern short story has gone through many transformations, and the innovations of its practitioners have often pointed the way for prose fiction as a whole. The short story has been seized upon and refreshed by diverse cultures and aesthetic affiliations, so that perhaps the only stable definition of the form remains the famous one advanced by Poe, one of its early masters, as a work of fiction that can be read in one sitting. Still, common elements of the form have emerged over the last century and this course will study them, including point of view, plot, character, setting and theme. John Hawkes once famously called these last four elements the “enemies of the novel,” and many short story writers have seen them as hindrances as well. Hawkes later recanted, though some writers would still agree with his earlier assessment, and this course will examine the successful strategies of great writers across the spectrum of short story practice, from traditional approaches to more radical solutions, keeping in mind how one period’s revolution—Hemingway, for example—becomes a later era’s mainstream or “commonsense” storytelling mode. By reading the work of major writers from a writer’s perspective, we will examine the myriad techniques employed for what is finally a common goal: to make readers feel. Short writing exercises will help us explore the exhilarating subtleties of these elements and how the effects created by their manipulation or even outright absence power our most compelling fictions.

Instructor
Sec 01  Alena Graedon

WRIT W3830  Voices and Visions of Childhood

Flannery O’Connor famously said, "Anybody who has survived his childhood has enough information about life to last him the rest of his days.” A child’s or youth’s journey-- whether through ordinary, universal rites of passage, or through extraordinary adventure or trauma-- compels an adult reader (and writer) to (re)inhabit the world as both naïf and nature’s savant. Through the knowing/unknowing eye of the child or adolescent, the writer can explore adult topics prismatically and poignantly --“from the bottom up” -- via humor, terror, innocence, wonder, or all of the above. In this course, we will read both long and short form examples of childhood and youth stories, examining in particular the relationships between narrator and character, character and world (setting), character and language, and narrator and reader (i.e. “reliability” of narrator). Short scene-based writing assignments will challenge student writers to both mine their own memories for material and imagine voices/experiences far from their own. A final assignment will be a longer, complete story, built from one of the scenes.

Instructor
Sec 01  Ben Metcalf
WRIT W3323 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 3325 Truth And Facts: Creative License In Nonfiction

As writers of literary nonfiction, we seek to articulate the truth about people, personal experiences, and events. But how do those pesky facts figure in? Demarcating the boundaries of reasonable artistic license is an ongoing debate between writers, editors, fact-checkers, and audiences. Can changing chronologies and identifying details help the writer arrive at a deeper truth about her subject? Or are the facts intractable? Where do we draw the line between fabrication and artistry? Is there any merit to what Werner Herzog deems “the ecstatic truth?” Do different rules apply for writing memoir versus writing reported essays and articles? How can we work responsibly with quotes while making dialogue readable? Just how experimental can we be while earning the mantle of nonfiction? In this class we will read works that take different approaches at mining toward the truth and unpack various distinct points of view on the debate.

Our classes will consist mainly of discussion, with occasional in-class writing exercises and presentations. Students will write reflection papers on the assigned texts throughout the course and compose their own code of nonfiction ethics by the term’s end, and examine their own work under this rubric.

Instructor
Sec 01 Elizabeth Greenwood

WRIT W3335 The Lyric Essay

While nonfiction is perhaps known for its allegiance to facts and logic in the stalwart essay form, the genre conducts its own experiments, often grouped under the term "lyric essays." Lyric essays are sometimes fragmentary, suggestive, meditative, inconclusive; they may glance only sidelong at their subject, employ the compression of poetry, and perform magic tricks in which stories slip down blind alleys, discursive arguments dissolve into ellipses, and narrators disappear altogether. Lyric essayists blend a passion for the actual with innovative forms, listening deeply to the demands of each new subject. In this course, students will map the terrain of the lyric essay, work in which writers revise nonfiction traditions such as: coherent narrative or rhetorical arcs; an identifiable, transparent, or stable narrator; and the familiar categories of memoir, personal essay, travel writing, and argument. Students will read work that challenges these familiar contours, including selections from Halls of Fame by John D'Agata, Don't Let Me Be Lonely by Claudia Rankine, Plainwater by Anne Carson, Letters to Wendy by Joe Wenderoth, The Body and One Love Affair by Jenny Boully, Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, Running in the Family by Michael Ondaatje, Neck Deep and Other Predicaments by Ander Monson. They can expect to read essays selected from The Next American Essay edited by John D'Agata and In Short: A Collection of
**Brief Creative Nonfiction** edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, as well as essays by Paul Metcalf, David Foster Wallace, Sherman Alexie, Michael Martone, and Sei Shonagon. The course will be conducted seminar style, with close reading, lecture, and classroom discussion. The students will be expected to prepare a written study and comments for class on a particular book/author/issue. They will also complete writing exercises and their own lyric essay(s), one of which we will discuss as a class. Their final project will be a collection of their creative work accompanied by an essay discussing their choices.

**Instructor**
Sec 01 Jennifer Percy

**WRIT W3353 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 Siena, 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 Tretheway), New York School (Alice Notley and Hannah Weiner), as well as additional contemporary poets (Lynn Melnick and Matthea Harvey).

**Instructor**
Sec 01 Dorothea Lasky,

**WRIT W3372 Formally Yours: Experiments with Form and (Neo)Formalism in Contemporary American Poetry**

From Marilyn Hacker's lesbian sonnets to the Afro-formalist invention of the bop, a wide array of American poets are engaging with and encouraging radical reconsiderations of received forms. How and why are poets--particularly from historically underrepresented communities--turning to and reimagining form and formalism? What exactly does (neo)formalism mean in recent years and who are the poets who are shaping this terrain? How have the formal experimentalations by Black, queer, feminist, and other poets of color transformed and transgressed the borders of American poetry? Each week during the first two months of the semester we will study and produce a selection of contemporary poetic experiments with a particular received, traditional, newly invented, or ghost form such as sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, triolets, blues, and prose poems. We will spend the last month of the semester studying collections by
contemporary poets who deploy a variety of received and new forms. What do these forms and their rules, restrictions, and reconfigurations make possible for both the poets we study and for our own practice?

Instructor
Sec 01 Deborah Paredez

WRIT W3308 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 Ann DeWitt

WRIT W3371 Structure and Style

This seminar explores fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, as related disciplines. While each genre has its particular opportunities and demands, all can utilize such devices as narrative, dialogue, imagery, and description (scenes, objects, and thought processes). Through a wide variety of readings and writing exercises, we will examine and explore approaches to language, ways of telling a story (linear and nonlinear), and how pieces are constructed. Some student work will be briefly workshopped.

Instructor
Sec 01 Alan Ziegler

WRIT 3388 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