

# CA/T Community Classes (CCC)

Creative Writing | Columbia University



Allen Ginsberg, American poet and Columbia alumnus

**COURSEBOOK**  
Spring 2021

# INFORMATION

CA/T Community Classes are free, noncredit creative writing seminars and workshops in fiction, poetry, nonfiction and cross-genre. Taught by MFA Writing Program students in Columbia University's School of the Arts, these classes are designed to facilitate discussions of literary pieces and provide a space for feedback on student work.

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

Creative Writing for Justice is open to formerly incarcerated Columbia students and affiliates of the Center for Justice and the Directly Impacted Group (DIG).

Classes meet once weekly for four to six weeks. All classes this semester will meet remotely over Zoom. Classes are capped at 12 students, except for the generic workshops which are capped at 10.

CCC coordinator, Sylvia Gindick, will contact you by Monday 3/1 only if you have been assigned a class, or later if you are moved off a waitlist.

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## HOW TO REGISTER:

You may register for one (1) CCC Creative Writing course a semester.

To choose your classes, please visit: [Spring 2021 Registration Form](#).

More information is also available at our website, <https://arts.columbia.edu/cat/CCC>.

If you have any further questions, please email CCC coordinator, Sylvia Gindick, at: [soa-writing-ccc@columbia.edu](mailto:soa-writing-ccc@columbia.edu)

# COURSE LIST

## FICTION

**NO TRANSLATION NECESSARY: ENGLISH AS A SECOND LITERARY LANGUAGE** | E. Madison Shimoda

Mon. 12:00pm-2:00pm

**PAIN, DESIRE, AND TENSION** | Raad Rahman

Mon. 4:30pm-6:30pm

**THE EPISTOLARY NARRATIVE** | Cassandra Lieu

Thurs. 12:00pm-2:00pm

**GENERIC FICTION WORKSHOP** | Instructor TBA

Sun. 2:00pm-4:00pm \*5 weeks\*

## POETRY

**A LEXICON OF NATURE POETRY** | Will Thomas

Tues. 4:00pm-6:00pm

**RE-MYTHOLOGIZING** | Edison Angelbello

Thurs. 10:00am-12:00pm

**WORKSHOP! / THEORY! / PUBLISH!** | Louis Vowell

Fri. 4:00pm-6:00pm \*4 weeks\*

**LAW POETRY AND THE POETICS OF LAW** | Tiffany Troy

Sat. 7:30pm-9:30pm

**GENERIC POETRY WORKSHOP** | Sylvia Gindick

Sun. 2:00pm-4:00pm \*5 weeks\*

## **NONFICTION**

**WRITING SHAME | Shir Mina Orner**

Tues. 10:00am-12:00pm

**GENERIC NONFICTION WORKSHOP | Instructor TBA**

Sun. 2:00pm-4:00pm \*5 weeks\*

## **CROSS-GENRE**

**COMEDY WRITING FOR THE COMEDICALLY DEFICIENT | Dan**

**Dellechiaie**

Tues. 2:00pm-4:00pm

**HYBRID FORMS, HYBRID STRUCTURES | Nicole Saldarriaga**

Fri. 10:00am-12:00pm

**GENERIC MIXED WORKSHOP | Instructor TBA**

Sun. 2:00pm-4:00pm \*5 weeks\*

## FICTION

**NO TRANSLATION NECESSARY:  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LITERARY LANGUAGE  
E. Madison Shimoda**

Mon. 12:00pm – 2:00pm  
Dates: March 8 – April 12

In this seminar, we will examine works by authors who write or have written in English as a second language. We will explore questions such as: How does a writer's mother tongue play a part in their English-language storytelling—in its particular syntax, its sense of musicality, and its meaning-making? What are the pros and cons of writing in a language of slight remove? What can such a language express about placement and displacement?

Yann Martel, whose first language is French, once said in an interview, “I’m comfortable writing only in English. I feel I control that language, that I can play it like an instrument, as I want to.” We will look at short excerpts from authors who, like Martel, write in English as a second language, including but not limited to Xiaolu Guo (Chinese), Aleksandar Hemon (Bosnian), Yiyun Li (Chinese), and Vladimir Nabokov (Russian), and examine how they deploy language to breach (or not breach) cultural barriers. We will identify the choices these writers have made to bring their narratives to life and consider how we can incorporate their linguistic approaches into our own work, regardless of whether we speak English as our first, second, or only language. In the final week of the class, students will have the opportunity to submit a short piece influenced by the style of one of the writers we’ve read.

## **PAIN, DESIRE, AND TENSION**

**Raad Rahman**

Mon. 4:30pm-6:30pm

Dates: March 8-April 12

The space between what a character wants and what a character receives, is what often propels a narrative. How does a character's desire for love, affection, revenge, isolation, or belonging transform their behavior when they do not receive what they want? How do they transform their heartbreak or exclusion on the page? How can we chart mental disturbances and trauma? How is narrative tension created and then sustained for a satisfying read?

In this six week course, we will interrogate obsessions within stories, and learn how to chart the desires and pain that shape a narrative arc. Using writing prompts, we will build fictional narrative arcs in our own writing, to deepen our understandings about points of view, character development, scene setting, and dialogue.

Authors we may be reading include Elena Ferrante, Ottessa Moshfegh, Mariana Enríquez, Ada Limón, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nafissa Thompson-Spires, Joy Williams, among others.

## **THE EPISTOLARY NARRATIVE**

**Cassandra Lieu**

Thurs. 12:00pm-2:00pm

Dates: March 11 – April 15

Long before the invention of the telephone, letters were the people's main mode of long distance communication. Although snail mail is considered old-fashioned now, in a time period where it is possible to communicate face to face over long distances, we still resort to written word such as text messages and email as main lines of communication. What is gained from communication through writing rather than through speech? What is lost? What kind of stories can be and are told through written mediums? What are the limits to this form? How can we create compelling characters and narratives through what is written? How can we create a sense of cohesion between multiple documents? And what even is a 'story of documents'?

In this six week course, we will focus on the epistolary genre and the possibilities of the narratives it can create. We will explore the different forms of the epistolary genre and analyze the elements that make up one. Each session, we will discuss and analyze the readings along with responding to a writing prompt inspired by the reading. By the fifth session, students will have an opportunity to submit a draft of their own story of documents for peer review/in-class workshop. Our reading list will include works/excerpts of novels by C.S. Lewis, Edwidge Danticat, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Stephen King, Octavia Butler, and Julie Schumacher (list is subjected to change). All reading materials will be provided.

## **GENERIC FICTION WORKSHOP**

**Instructor TBA**

Sun. 2:00pm– 4:00pm

Dates: March 7– April 11

(No class April 4 for Easter Sunday; 5 weeks)

This workshop aims to create an engaging, generative space of exploration and experimentation for writers at all levels.

# POETRY

## A LEXICON OF NATURE POETRY

Will Thomas

Tues. 4:00pm – 6:00pm

Dates: March 9 – April 13

We all carry landscapes, whether the place of your birth, whatever ecosystem surrounds you presently, or where you yearn for. Our natural world has an expansive space of language which we use to describe all different facets of landscape and nature. This exists in varying degrees from scientific nomenclature to the cliché'd. All of which spreads out to a wide array of biomes whether the Rocky Mountains, swamps of Louisiana, or the shoreline of the Hudson River; each region contains its own unique flora and fauna. In order to become acquainted with this language we will examine works such as Joanna Klink's *Circadian*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, and selected poems from *Black Nature Anthology*. Our look into poetry will cover different styles such as the Necro-Pastoral, Transcendentalism, and Later Romanticism. We will curate our own word bank of nature language.

Our readings and discussions will serve as a generative source for the students' own poetry. There will be optional prompts for those wanting further constraint to tap in to the natural world. Students will use the language of nature to write poems about these landscapes, with the option to workshop in class.

## **RE-MYTHOLOGIZING**

### **Edison Angelbello**

Thurs. 10:00am-12:00pm

Dates: March 11 – April 14

“Myths are stories about people who become too big for their lives temporarily, so that they crash into other lives or brush against gods. In crisis their souls are visible.” - Anne Carson

What happens when we take tales of these visible souls and reconfigure them to our own liking, changing or re-interpreting them to fit a contemporary context, or maybe just a different context, perhaps with a new meaning entirely.

In this class, we will examine the work of poets who take the motifs of certain mythologies (classical or otherwise) and twist them in order to create new myths, new stories, new meanings. We will explore writers who subvert texts using erasure (such as Mary Szybist), writers who use inventive language to allow myths to inhabit multiple meanings (as with Heidi Lynn Staples’ *Guess Can Gallop*), and writers who reconfigure myths in contemporary settings (Anne Carson in *Autobiography of Red*).

The course will function as half seminar (with discussion-based conversations surrounding works that we read in and out of class) and half workshop (with each participant submitting short drafts).

## **WORKSHOP! / THEORY! / PUBLISH!**

**Louis Vowell**

Fri. 4:00pm-6:00pm

Dates: March 12 – April 2

(4 weeks)

This class is designed to explore some of poetry's most influential, though ever-nebulous theories and terms, as well as make us better readers and writers through an intense, yet empathetic critique of our own writing. 75% poetry workshop. 20% theory. 5% publication.

At the beginning of each class we will familiarize ourselves with seminal poetic complexities, putting forth our own interpretations and explanations. What's left of poetry that still requires exploration? And how might our understanding of other writers, and the answers we put forth for their ideas, influence or make us re-evaluate our own craft?

The second portion of class will be spent workshopping. Along the way we will address each other's questions about publishing — how to submit, what to expect, how to create your own journal, etc.

Readings are minimal (15 pages over the course of four weeks) though far reaching. We'll cover poems and philosophies by Shelley, Keats, Rilke, Charles Olson, and James Wright, to name a few.

*Curious, concerned, or confused by anything? Looking for a weekly breakdown of the class? Let's chat! LV2444@Columbia.edu*

## **LAW POETRY AND THE POETICS OF LAW**

**Tiffany Troy**

Sat. 7:30pm-9:30pm

Dates: March 13-April 17

In this class, we will examine poetry by law-trained poets that challenges the rigidity of the law. This includes documentary poetry that omits judicial decisions, subverts statutory or dictionary definitions, or defies the criminal (in)justice system. Other poems more directly draw from everyday legal practice or courtroom drama in staging real, historical, or fictional worlds where justice is conspicuously absent.

We will take a close look at selections by law-trained poets Reginald Dwayne Betts, Ilya Kaminsky, Archibald MacLeish, Charles Reznikoff, Monica Youn, and others. Each week, we will focus on one poet lawyer and look to how they deployed rhetoric to find inspiration and create cognizable orders of their own.

At the end of the six-week session, we will celebrate our own law-inspired poetry in a class anthology.

## **GENERIC POETRY WORKSHOP**

**Sylvia Gindick**

Sun. 2:00pm– 4:00pm

Dates: March 7– April 11

(No class April 4 for Easter Sunday; 5 weeks)

This workshop aims to create an engaging, generative space of exploration and experimentation for writers at all levels.

# NONFICTION

## WRITING SHAME

Shir Mina Orner

Tues. 10:00am – 12:00pm

Dates: March 9 – April 13

“To publish an honest essay is, always, to risk shame.” — Jonathan Franzen

In creative nonfiction, the narrator’s “I” notices and takes notes, directing the reader’s gaze and attention like a guide. In the process, however, the “I” might risk—often unintentionally—seeming all-seeing or all-knowing.

In this six-week course, we’ll discuss a different kind of “I”. We’ll explore ways to challenge the narrators of our essays—to keep them accountable for, and aware of, their own blindspots. What might the “I” be unable to see? What might it see and be unwilling to show?

In class-time discussions and prompts, we’ll strive to reach down for the more ambiguous, less knowing “I”s: our fumbling, stuttering, hesitant first-person(s). We’ll ask: how might we resist our tendency to inhabit the insightful “I,” and what would it mean to inhabit an “I” whose intentions are not noble, moral, or easily defensible? An “I” who isn’t consistent, who may cause us embarrassment—even shame?

Reading short selections from writers like Jonathan Franzen, John Berger, Kristin Dombek, Jo Ann Beard, Paul Crenshaw and others, we’ll explore different regions of shame as they appear in writing. We’ll consider the functions of a narrator’s discomfort with, alongside their command over, their narratives: what kinds of light might discomfort shed on our “I”s? What would these new lights reveal, and where would they lead our work?

All readings will be provided; limited outside reading may be required. At the end of the course, students will be invited to submit an optional short piece and receive feedback.

## **GENERIC NONFICTION WORKSHOP**

**Instructor TBA**

Sun. 2:00pm– 4:00pm

Dates: March 7– April 11

(No class April 4 for Easter Sunday; 5 weeks)

This workshop aims to create an engaging, generative space of exploration and experimentation for writers at all levels.

## **CROSS-GENRE**

### **COMEDY WRITING FOR THE COMEDICALLY DEFICIENT**

**Dan Dellechiaie**

Tues. 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Dates: March 9 – April 13

Comedy Writing for the Comedically Deficient will include such segments as: The Comedy We Consumed That Week, A Lecture about a Type of Comedy, The Weekly Donation to Your Teacher's Bank Account, and Workshopping Your Comedy Writing.

The first class will be a discussion about workshop guidelines. Four classes will be devoted to learning the different types of comedy and workshopping your comedy writing. The fifth class's topic will be decided by your benevolent overlord—I mean, by you! YES! YOU! And the sixth class will be a class party! For homework, I'll only require you to spend thirty minutes a day around comedy.

So if you got a few bawdy stories up your sleeve or your partner has threatened to break up with you if you tell ONE MORE DAMN JOKE about mixing up hand sanitizer and eye drops, then come on down to the only comedy writing course at Columbia run by comedy writers, for comedy writers!

## HYBRID FORMS, HYBRID STRUCTURES

Nicole Saldarriaga

Fri. 10:00am-12:00pm

Dates: March 12-April 16

How can subverting the expectations of traditional story structure help us generate new ideas and bust through creative blocks? In this six-week course, we will explore works that employ non-traditional structures—utilizing techniques like erasure, fragments, mixtures of verse and prose, and more—and discuss how writers choose the “right” structure for their piece. We will explore how the same narrative could achieve different results in different structures/forms.

In-class writing exercises will prompt students to free themselves from traditional story structure and try new things, such as writing a story in the form of a calendar or a numbered list, using fragments or mixtures of prose and verse, and more. It is recommended to have some simple art supplies, such as markers/crayons/watercolors, on hand if possible.

Class time will be divided into reading and discussion time, generative writing exercises, and reading or sharing our work with the class, if comfortable. Students will be encouraged to give verbal feedback to their classmates to read aloud. While this class will focus on generation and play and will not have a formal workshop component, students will have the option to refine a single short piece and receive detailed feedback from the instructor. Readings may include excerpts from the following. All readings will be handed out in class. Outside reading and writing will be optional.

*Bluets* – Maggie Nelson

*A Humument* – Tom Phillips

“Melody” – Mary Ruefle

*The House on Mango Street* – Sandra Cisneros

*Faces in the Crowd* – Valeria Luiselli

*This Big Fake World* – Ada Limón

*The Needle’s Eye* – Fanny Howe

*Running in the Family* – Michael Ondaatje

*Brown Girls* – Daphne Palasi Andreades

S – J.J. Abrams

Exercises in Style – Raymond Queneau

“Help Me Follow My Sister into the Land of the Dead” – Carmen Maria Machado

“The Man Who Rowed Christopher Columbus Ashore” – Harlan Ellison

## **GENERIC MIXED WORKSHOP**

**Instructor TBA**

Sun. 2:00pm– 4:00pm

Dates: March 7– April 11

(No class April 4 for Easter Sunday; 5 weeks)

This workshop aims to create an engaging, generative space of exploration and experimentation for writers of all genres, at all levels.