

UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE WRITING

writingprogram@columbia.edu

<http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate>

FALL 2021 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 website at <http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate> for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 1100 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 Rona Figueroa

Sec 02 Alexander Jacobs

Sec 03 Cameron Menchel

Sec 04 Kameron Morton

Sec 05 Nicole Saldariagga

WRIT UN 1200 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 Odelia Lu

Sec 02 Darby Minow Smith

Sec 03 Rafaela Yoneshigue Bassili

WRIT UN 1300 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 Flora Field

Sec 02 Sylvia Gindick

INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 2100 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 Heidi Julavits

Sec 02 Madeleine Watts

WRIT UN 2200 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 John Vincler

WRIT UN 2300 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 Alex Dimitrov

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3100 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 Daniel Magarief

WRIT UN 3200 Advanced 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

Sec 01 John Vincler

WRIT UN 3300 Advanced 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

Sec 01 Dorothea Lasky

SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3101 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 Crystal Kim

SEMINARS

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

David Wallace

WRIT UN3115 Make It Strange

Making the familiar strange, making the strange familiar: these are among the most dexterous, variously re-imagined, catholically deployed, and evergreen of literary techniques. From Roman Jakobson and the Russian Formalists, to postmodern appropriations of pop culture references, techniques of defamiliarization and the construction of the uncanny have helped literature succeed in altering the vision of habit, habit being that which Proust so aptly describes as a second nature which prevents us from knowing the first.

In this course, we will examine precisely how writers have negotiated and presented the alien and the domestic, the extraordinary and the ordinary. Looking at texts that both intentionally and unintentionally unsettle the reader, the class will pay special attention to the pragmatics of writerly choices made at the levels of vocabulary, sentence structure, narrative structure, perspective, subject matter, and presentations of time. Students will have four creative and interrelated writing assignments, each one modeling techniques discussed in the preceding weeks.

Instructor

Hilary Leichter

WRIT UN3122 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 an 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

Halle Butler

WRIT UN3126 Animal Tales

Why look at animals? The post-humanist scholar Donna Haraway proposes an answer: We polish an animal mirror to look at ourselves. In this course, we will look at works of cultural production that explore the myriad relationships between human and nonhuman animals. We will read stories that dissolve the barrier between the domestic and the wild, that propose the possibility of human-animal hybrids. We will read stories from an animal's-eye-view, imagining the world as an animal might: as a worm digging through the dirt toward an imagined utopia, as an elephant seeking vengeance against poachers, as a cultivated monkey exhausted by the cruelty of human society. In the midst of this sixth extinction, as animals disappear as a direct consequence of human activity, the need for animal stories is more urgent than ever. Through the writing of animal tales, this course will challenge the writer to imagine a future that is at once ecological, entwined, and equitable—for all species.

Instructor

Anelise Chen

WRIT UN2211 Traditions In Nonfiction

The seminar provides exposure to the varieties of nonfiction with readings in its principal genres: reportage, criticism and commentary, biography and history, and memoir and the personal essay. A highly plastic medium, nonfiction allows authors to portray real events and experiences through narrative, analysis, polemic or any combination thereof. Free to invent everything but the facts, great practitioners of nonfiction are faithful to reality while writing with a voice and a vision distinctively their own. To

show how nonfiction is conceived and constructed, class discussions will emphasize the relationship of content to form and style, techniques for creating plot and character under the factual constraints imposed by nonfiction, the defining characteristics of each author's voice, the author's subjectivity and presence, the role of imagination and emotion, the uses of humor, and the importance of speculation and attitude. Written assignments will be opportunities to experiment in several nonfiction genres and styles.

Instructor

Mark Rozzo

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

Margo Jefferson

WRIT UN2310 Approaches To Poetry

One advantage of writing poetry within a rich and crowded literary tradition is that there are many poetic tools available out there, stranded where their last practitioners dropped them, some of them perhaps clichéd and overused, yet others all but forgotten or ignored. In this class, students will isolate, describe, analyze, and put to use these many tools, while attempting to refurbish and contemporize them for the new century. Students can expect to imitate and/or subvert various poetic styles, voices, and forms, to invent their own poetic forms and rules, to think in terms of not only specific poetic forms and metrics, but of overall poetic architecture (lineation and diction, repetition and surprise, irony and sincerity, rhyme and soundscape), and finally, to leave those traditions behind and learn to strike out in their own direction, to write -- as poet Frank O'Hara said -- on their own nerve.

Instructor

Alicia Mountain

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Edison Angelbello

WRIT GU4310 Witness, Record, Document: Poetry & Testimony

This seminar takes up the terms witness, record, and document as nouns and verbs. What is poetry of witness? Documentary poetry? Poetry as (revisionist) historical record? What labor and what ethical, political, and aesthetic considerations are required of poets who endeavor to witness, record, or document historical events or moments of trauma? How is this approach to poetry informed by or contributing to feminist theories, aesthetic innovation, and revisionist approaches to official histories? Course materials include: 1) essays that explore the poetics and politics of "poetry of witness" or "documentary poetry"; 2) a range of contemporary American poetry that has been classified as or has productively challenged these categories; 3) and audio, video, and photographic projects on which poets have collaborated. Our encounters with this work will be guided by and grounded in conversations about ideas of "truth," "text," the power relations of "documentation," and issues of language and representation in poetry. We will also critically examine the formal (rhyme, rhythm, diction, form, genre, point of view, imagery, etc.) and philosophical components and interventions of the work we study and create.

Instructor

Deborah Paredez

WRIT UN3014 Structure & 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 UN 3016 Walking

As Walter Benjamin notes in *The Arcades Project*: "Basic to flânerie, among other things, is the idea that the fruits of idleness are more precious than the fruits of labor. The flâneur, as is well known, makes 'studies'." This course will encourage you to make "studies" – poems, essays, stories, or multimedia pieces – based on your walks. We will read depictions of walking from multiple disciplines, including philosophy, poetry, history, religion, visual art, and urban planning. Occasionally we will walk together. An important point of the course is to develop mobile forms of writing. How can writing emerge from, and document, a walk's encounters, observations, and reflections? What advantages does mobility bring

to our work? Each week you will write a short piece (1-3 pages) that engages your walks while responding to close readings of the assigned material.

Instructor

Sec 01 Jon Cotner

WRIT UN3019 Prose Poem or Poetic Prose?--Defining and Exploring a Literary Genre

"Prose poem," "lyrical prose," "poetry in prose," "poetic prose," etc. Just what do we mean by any of these terms? What is it to write poetry without the techniques of enjambment or stanza? What is it to write "in prose" without a linear commitment to syntax or narrative? This course will take a close look at literary works that live in the borderlands between verse (whether "free" or not) and fiction. Through a close analysis of works by Arthur Rimbaud, Gertrude Stein, Claudia Rankine, Italo Calvino, Margaret Atwood, James Wright, Franz Kafka, Lydia Davis, and others, students will develop their own creative approaches to this elusive literary "genre." Our discussions will focus on narrative tensions; prosodic techniques; imagery; diction; syntax; and historical, social, and political context.

Instructor

Sec 01 Joseph Fasano

WRIT UN3023 Hauntings: Ghosts, Presences & Residues in the Literary Imagination

"I believe—I know that ghosts have wandered the earth. Be with me always— take any form—drive me mad!" —Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* In this course we'll expand our understanding of how writing is often the site of lingering, numinous, immaterial presences. We'll begin with the tradition of the ghost story— a literary device beloved by writers for centuries across many genres. Beyond the consideration of the supernatural, we'll also investigate more abstract capacities in which texts—and writers (and sometimes editors!)—are inevitably possessed by an other, a presence that lingers persistently, making itself known whether we welcome it or not. Memory and trauma are their own kinds of ghosts. Similarly, we'll discover how traces of works by writers we admire, our teachers, even a specific text or image, can manifest as spectral forms inhabiting our work. We'll address the complexities of those vestiges in terms of appropriation and originality—what Harold Bloom calls "the anxiety of influence." Students will process and explore these ideas in both creative and analytical writings throughout the semester.

Instructor

Sec 01 Samantha Zigelboim