UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE WRITING
School of the Arts
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http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate

FALL 2019 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 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
Sec 02
Sec 03
Sec 04

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
Sec 02

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
Sec 02
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  Crystal Hana Kim

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  Alexander 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  Ann DeWitt
Sec 02  Hilary Leichter
WRIT UN 3200  Advanced Nonfiction Workshop

Advanced Nonfiction Workshop is for students with significant narrative and/or critical experience. Students will produce original literary nonfiction for the workshop, with an added focus on developing a distinctive voice and approach.

_Instructor_
Section 01  Will Hunt

WRIT UN 3300  Advanced Poetry Workshop

This poetry workshop is reserved for accomplished poetry writers and maintains the highest level of creative and critical expectations. Students will be encouraged to develop their strengths and to cultivate a distinctive poetic vision and voice but must also demonstrate a willingness to broaden their range and experiment with new forms and notions of the poem. A portfolio of poetry will be written and revised with the critical input of the instructor and the workshop.

_Instructor_
Section 01  Shane McCrae

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  Tracy O’Neill
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 UN3116 The Story Collection as Literary Art Form
How do story collections happen? Are they just anthologies of the best (or the only) stories a writer has produced in a given time period? How do you decide what goes in it, and how do you organize it, and how many do you need? In this class we’re going to read a bunch of short story collections, in a variety of genres and modes. Rigorous literary, aesthetic, and critical analysis of individual stories will here be linked to macro-level questions such as: What makes a "linked collection" different from a novel? What are some of the ways that a "linked" collection forges its links—character, theme, place, narrative strategy, mood, etc.? How does a writer handle her recurring themes without falling into repetition? How does the story collection compare with (or relate to) self-anthologizing forms in other disciplines: the poetry collection, the record album, the solo exhibition?

BOOKS
The Piazza Tales - Herman Melville (1856)
Red Cavalry - Isaac Babel (Peter Constantine trans.)
Normal People Don’t Live Like This - Dylan Landis (2009)
The Train to Lo Wu - Jess Row (2005)

Instructor
Jordan Kisner

WRIT UN3120 The Craft of Writing Dialogue
Whether texting, chatting, conversing, speechifying, recounting, confiding, gossiping, 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  Daniel Magariel
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
Elianna Kan

WRIT UN3210 The Modern Arts Writer

This course will examine the lineaments of critical writing. A critic blends the subjective and objective in complex ways. A critic must know the history of an artwork, (its past), while placing it on the contemporary landscape and contemplating its future. A single essay will analyze, argue, describe, reflect and interpret. And, since examining a work of art also means examining oneself, the task includes a willingness to probe one’s own assumptions and biases. The best critics are engaged in a conversation -- a dialogue, a debate -- with changing standards of taste, with their audience, with their own convictions and emotions. The best criticism is part of a larger cultural conversation. It spurs readers to ask questions rather than accept answers about art and society.

We will read essays that consider six art forms: literature; film; music (classical, jazz and popular); theater and performance; visual art; and dance. At the term’s end, students will consider essays that examine cultural boundaries and divisions: the negotiations between popular and high art; the aesthetic of cruelty; the post-modern blurring of and between artist, critic and fan. The reading list will include such writers as Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, Elizabeth Hardwick, Roland Barthes, (literature); James Agee, Manny Farber, Pauline Kael, Zadie Smith (film); G.B. Shaw, Willa Cather, Ralph Ellison, Gerald Early, Lester Bangs, Ellen Willis (music); Eric Bentley, Mary McCarthy, C.L.R. James (theater); Leo Steinberg, Frank O’Hara, Ada Louise Huxtable, Maggie Nelson (visual art); Edwin Denby, Arlene Croce, Elizabeth Kendall, Mindy Aloff (dance); Susan Sontag, Anthony Heilbut, John Jeremiah Sullivan (cultural criticism)

Instructor
Margo Jefferson

WRIT UN3216 Truth & 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  Heather Radke

**WRIT UN3315 Poetic Meter And Form**

This course will investigate the uses of rhythmic order and disorder in English-language poetry, with a particular emphasis on ‘formal’ elements in ‘free’ verse. Through a close analysis of poems, we’ll examine the possibilities of qualitative meter, and students will write original creative work within (and in response to) various formal traditions. Analytical texts and poetic manifestoes will accompany our reading of exemplary poems.

Each week, we’ll study interesting examples of metrical writing, and I’ll ask you to write in response to those examples. Our topics will include _stress meter, syllable-stress meter, double and triple meters, rising and falling rhythms, promotion, demotion, inversion, elision, and foot scansion_. Our study will include a great range of pre-modern and modern writers, from Keats to W. D. Snodgrass, Shakespeare to Denise Levertov, Blake to James Dickey, Whitman to Louise Gluck, etc. As writers, we’ll always be thinking about how the _formal choices_ of a poem are appropriate or inappropriate for the poem’s _content_. We’ll also read prose by poets describing their metrical craft.

_Instructor_
Joseph Fasano

**WRIT GU4310 Witness, Record, Document: Poetry and 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 Paradiez

**WRIT UN3011 Translation Seminar**

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

In this introductory course to literary translation, students will learn about the art of translating prose and poetry. We will read essays on translation by writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, and Anne Carson, and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of different approaches to the craft. Students will present their own translations for discussion and become familiar with a range of perspectives on literary translation that will inform their revision process. We'll also discuss the way works in translation are reviewed and each student will review a recent translation for the end of the semester.

_Instructor_
Bonnie Chau
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  Elianna Kan

WRIT UN3016 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 UN3211 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  Melody Nixon