Fall 2019

Coursebook

Workshops  Seminars  Lectures  Master Classes

Updated: August 27, 2019
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## List of Courses by Day and Time

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<td>Master Classes</td>
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## Course Descriptions

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<tr>
<th>Seminars</th>
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<td>Literary Translation Workshop</td>
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<td>Special Projects Workshop</td>
<td>39</td>
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# WORKSHOPS

## FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam Lipsyte</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivka Galchen</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brit Bennett</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Steger Strong</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binnie Kirshenbaum</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshua Furst</td>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna Hershon</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Beatty</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Christopher</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Metcalf</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anelise Chen</td>
<td>Fri.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cañón</td>
<td>Fri.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
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## NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Days</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Orange</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda Wineapple</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Venegas</td>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>9:30am-12:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Perry</td>
<td>Fri.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
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## NONFICTION – THESIS (9 points)

Second-Years only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Jamison</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip Lopate</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy S. Walters</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Locke</td>
<td>Tue.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Greenberg</td>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
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## POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phillip B. Williams</td>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Donnelly</td>
<td>Wed.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane McCrae</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Xu</td>
<td>Thu.</td>
<td>10am-1pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Skillings</td>
<td>Fri.</td>
<td>2pm-5pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>Rivka Galchen (FI)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Exactly Historical Fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>Lincoln Michel (FI)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure and Its Discontents</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
<td>Deborah Eisenberg (FI)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies in Short Fiction: Unhappy Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
<td>Paul La Farge (FI)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Horror Fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
<td>Kate Zambreno (NF)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disobedient Texts</td>
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<td>3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
<td>Joshua Furst (FI)</td>
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<td>The Clock, The Calendar, The Almanac: Time in Fiction</td>
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<td>3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
<td>Erroll McDonald (FI)</td>
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<td>William Faulkner and World Fiction</td>
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<td>3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
<td>Ben Metcalf (FI)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>An Earnest Look at Irony</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>Monica Ferrell (CG)</td>
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<td>Word and Image: Reading and Writing</td>
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<td>10am-12pm</td>
<td>Contemporary Poetry for Prose Writers</td>
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<td>12:30pm-3:30pm</td>
<td>Leslie Jamison (NF)</td>
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<td>Archive Fever</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
<td>Timothy Donnelly (PO)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prosody</td>
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<td>1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
<td>Phillip Lopate (NF)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Studies in the Essay</td>
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<td>3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
<td>Alan Gilbert (PO)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Modern &amp; Contemporary Poetry, Part One (1900–1950): The Major Poets and Poetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
<td>Gideon Lewis-Kraus (NF)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reporting Non-News</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30pm-8:30pm</td>
<td>Joseph Fasano (PO)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Contemporary Long Poem</td>
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Seminars and translation workshops are 3 points.

(FI) = Fiction  (NF) = Nonfiction  (PO) = Poetry  (CG) = Cross-Genre  (TR) = Translation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Sola Kim (FI)</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
<td>Wed., 10am-12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo Jefferson (NF)</td>
<td>Third Form Narratives</td>
<td>Wed., 10am-12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lara Vapnyar (FI)</td>
<td>Building a Scene</td>
<td>Wed., 10am-12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Paredez (PO)</td>
<td>Witness, Record, Document: Poetry and Testimony</td>
<td>Wed., 10:10am-12pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ross Simonini (CG)</td>
<td>Process Writing</td>
<td>Wed., 2pm-4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wendy S. Walters (NF)</td>
<td>Write the Anthropocene in Environmental Time</td>
<td>Wed., 2pm-4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matvei Yankelevich (CG, TR)</td>
<td>Literary Translation Workshop</td>
<td>Wed., 4:30pm-7pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Binnie Kirshenbaum (FI)</td>
<td>The Excruciating</td>
<td>Wed., 5pm-7pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee Siegel (NF)</td>
<td>Criticism as a Way of Life</td>
<td>Wed., 2pm-4pm</td>
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### SEMINARS (cont’d.)

#### THURSDAY

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<tr>
<td>Keri Bertino (CG)</td>
<td>The Writer as Teacher</td>
<td>Thu., 10am-1pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Christopher (CG)</td>
<td>Mosaics: Unified Collections of Fiction &amp; Poetry</td>
<td>Thu., 10am-12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Krauss (FI)</td>
<td>This Place and No Place</td>
<td>Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin Hale (FI)</td>
<td>Imagining Nonhuman Consciousness</td>
<td>Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilton Als (CG)</td>
<td>Poet’s Prose</td>
<td>Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.K. Fischer (CG)</td>
<td>The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis</td>
<td>Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigid Hughes (CG)</td>
<td>Editing and the Writer</td>
<td>Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Van Dyck &amp; Xiaolu Guo (CG, TR)</td>
<td>The Hybrid Voice: Comparative Diasporas and Translation</td>
<td>Thu., 4:10pm-6pm</td>
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#### FRIDAY

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn Xu (PO)</td>
<td>Hallucinations</td>
<td>Fri., 10am-12pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrine Øgaard Jensen (CG, TR)</td>
<td>Literary Translation Workshop</td>
<td>Fri., 10:30am-1pm</td>
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LECTURES

—TUESDAY—

Joshua Cohen
Long Century, Short Novels
(3 points)
Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Alice Quinn
A Cornucopia of American Poetry
(3 points)
Wed., 5pm-7pm

—THURSDAY—

Richard Locke
Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction
(3 points)
Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm
MASTER CLASSES

**MONDAY**

**Emma Cline**  
Writing the Extreme (1 point)  
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm  
Sept. 16 - Oct. 7

**Cynthia Cruz**  
The Melancholia of Place (1.5 points)  
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm  
Sept. 23 - Oct. 28

**Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi**  
The Illusion of Truth: Writing Auto-Fiction (1.5 points)  
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm  
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9

**Alana Massey**  
Excel at Interviewing with Your Ethics and Your Empathy (and Even Your Edge!) Intact (1.5 points)  
Mon., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Sept. 23 - Oct. 28

**Richard Howard**  
The Richard Howard Hours (1.5 points)  
Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm  
I. Sept. 10 - Oct. 15  
II. Oct. 22 - Dec. 3

**James Wood**  
Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short Stories (1 point)  
Tue., 5:15pm-7:15pm  
Oct. 8 - Oct. 29

**Morgan Jerkins**  
No More Starving Artists: On Navigating Freelancing, Book Deals, and Everything in Between (1.5 points)  
Sept. 10 - Oct. 8  
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm

**Jesse Sheidlower**  
Defining the Dictionary (1.5 points)  
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oct. 8 - Nov. 19

**Peter Godwin**  
First Person Singular (1.5 points)  
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oct. 22 - Dec. 3

**TUESDAY**

**Susan Hartman**  
Writing About Communities (1.5 points)  
Wed., 5:15pm-7:15pm  
Oct. 16 - Nov. 20

**Ayanna Mathis**  
(Mis)Adventures in Time (1.5 points)  
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Sept. 26 - Oct. 31

**Mark Doten**  
Queer Form (1.5 points)  
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oct. 3 - Nov. 7

**Matthew Burgess**  
Serious Play: Teaching Imaginative Writing to Young People (1.5 points)  
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oct. 17 - Nov. 21

**Adam Wilson**  
Writing Funny (1.5 points)  
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm  
Oct. 24 - Dec. 5

**THURSDAY**

**Rebecca Godfrey**  
Anti-Heroines (1.5 points)  
Fri., 1:30pm-3:30pm  
Oct. 4 - Nov. 8

**Bela Shayevich**  
Connecting: Writing and Translation in Performance (1.5 points)  
Fri., 1:30pm-3:30pm  
Oct. 4 - Nov. 8

**FRIDAY**

**Leonard Schwartz**  
Eco-Poetics: The Black of the Page (1.5 points)  
Tue. & Fri., 10am-12pm  
Sept. 10 - Sept. 27

**Richard Ford**  
Reading Mrs. Dalloway (1.5 points)  
Mon - Fri, 10am-12pm  
Sept. 16 - Sept. 20

**OTHER**

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SEMINARS

Hilton Als

**Poet’s Prose**

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This is an interdisciplinary course that examines the poet’s relationship to prose. While artists as diverse as W.H. Auden and Tracy K. Smith became known, primarily, for their poetry, they, like many other twentieth and twenty-first century poets, have often explored nonfiction as a means of expressing that which cannot be written about in verse. What is the difference between their work in the two forms? We will not only read essays by artists including Marianne Moore and June Jordan, we will examine the poetry that seems to be a corollary to their nonfiction work.

Keri Bertino

**The Writer as Teacher**

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 10am-1pm

This class, for students with an interest in teaching creative writing in any setting, takes as a starting point two foundational questions of writing pedagogy: “Can it be taught?” and “Is it possible to teach English [writing] so that people stop killing each other?” Together, we’ll develop more (and more nuanced) inquiries in response to these questions, and seek to answer them through our exploration of the theories, practices, and contexts of teaching creative writing. Primary topics include fundamentals of both general and writing pedagogy (including process, multiple intelligences, creativity, and growth mindset), creating classroom communities, exercise and course development, responding to student writing, the workshop, and exploration of varied sites of creative writing. We’ll also take up broader questions of the role of the artist and teacher in communities, issues of professionalization, and the way that practices of teaching and writing fortify and inform one another.

In this part-seminar, part-practicum course, students design course descriptions and goals, and create and present both writing exercises and sample lessons, in addition to other readings, responses, and assignments.
Nicholas Christopher

Mosaics: Unified Collections of Fiction & Poetry

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 10am-12pm

We will examine assorted volumes of interconnected stories and book-length sequences of poems and prose-poems. The complex tension in such collections between the discrete, often eclectic, elements—whether stories or poems—and the unified whole make them a potent form that rivals the novel or long poem in imaginative resonance. By virtue of their verve and uniqueness, these books have influenced many others in their particular genres.

The reading list is international, and thematically varied:

- *A Universal History of Iniquity*, Jorge Luis Borges
- *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter
- *Madwomen: The "Locas Mujeres" Poems*, Gabriela Mistral
- *Mr. Cogito*, Zbigniew Herbert
- *Red Cavalry*, Isaac Babel
- *Jesus’ Son*, Denis Johnson
- *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories*, Yasunari Kawabata
- *The World Doesn’t End*, Charles Simic
- *Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino
- *Parentheses*, Yannis Ritsos
- *In Our Time*, Ernest Hemingway
- *The Ink Dark Moon*, Onono Komachi & Izumi Shikibu, trans. by Jane Hirshfield
- & a selection of *Sanskrit Love Poems*, trans. by W.S. Merwin
- *Concerning the Angels*, Rafael Alberti (a selection)
- *The Street of Crocodiles*, Bruno Schulz

Timothy Donnelly

Prosody

(Poetry) Tue., 12:30pm-3:30pm

First-year poets will be given priority in this class and are strongly encouraged to enroll in it. Two-thirds seminar, one-third craft class, this course is designed to provide poets with a comprehensive historical, theoretical, and practical overview of prosody in English, and to encourage original composition in—and informed experimentation with—traditional poetic meters and forms. In addition, the class will present a thorough survey of conventional poetic structures (enjambment, image, rhyme, refrain, etc.), the familiar rhetorical devices (anaphora, metaphor, metonymy, parataxis, etc.), and a few of the less familiar (apophasis, catachresis, hysteron proteron, etc.) that no poet should ever be without. Students will likewise be asked to experiment with these devices in new work written in whatever form they choose. The objective of the class is by no means a neo-formalist revival—rather, it is
the strengthening of students’ grasp of the poetic continuum into which they are writing and
the expansion and deepening of the skillsets with which they do so. Primary texts will range
from Neolithic rock formations to Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, from Modernist free verse
to contemporary traditional and innovative work and lyrics by A Tribe Called Quest.
Considerable emphasis will be placed on the ballad, iambic pentameter, and blank verse, as
well as on the sonnet and its history. Critical readings will be rigorous, including Derek
Attridge’s *The Rhythms of English Poetry* and John Fuller’s *The Sonnet*, excerpts from Antony
Easthope’s *Poetry as Discourse*, John Hollander’s *Vision and Resonance*, Barbara Herrnstein
Smith’s *Poetic Closure* and *On the Margins of Discourse*, and Elaine Scarry’s *Dreaming by the Book*.
We will also examine a handful of key defenses, manifestos, and so forth, including Sidney’s
Ages of Poetry,” Shelley’s “A Defence of Poetry,” and certain extracts of Keats’s and
Dickinson’s letters. We will also read such crucial essays as Shklovsky’s “Art as Technique,”
Lorca’s “Theory and Function of the Duende,” Valéry’s “Poetry and Abstract Thought,”
Baraka’s “Expressive Language,” and Hejinian’s “The Rejection of Closure.” Weekly reading
assignments will also include a selection of recent work demonstrating one or more of the
topics or techniques under discussion, including poems by Mary Jo Bang, Lucie Brock-
Broido, Joshua Clover, Wanda Coleman, Olena Kalytiak Davis, Jorie Graham, Terrance
Hayes, Paul Muldoon, Harryette Mullen, Geoffrey G. O’Brien, Alice Oswald, Don Paterson,
Justin Phillip Reed, Robyn Schiff, Mónica de la Torre, Karen Volkmann, John Yau, Monica
Youn, Kevin Young, and many others.

Deborah Eisenberg

**Studies in Short Fiction: Unhappy Families**

*(FICTION)*

Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

**Open to 2nd-year Fiction students only.** Maybe they are all different, as Tolstoy asserted,
but unhappy families can seem drearily similar in fiction. We’ve all read fiction about unhappy
families that is maudlin, melodramatic, sentimental, retributive, or otherwise false and
flattering to both author and reader. So we’ll look at some outstanding short pieces of fiction
that concern unhappy, or at least not happy families, which evade or transcend these clichééd
and self-justifying stances, and that explore painful family situations in inspired, profoundly
truthful, substantial, ingenious, and sometimes very funny ways.

Readings will include one short novel and one novella but will otherwise consist of stories. I
will expect students to be intimately familiar with each reading before the class in which it is
to be discussed, and I will require short written responses—one or two pages—to most or all
of the readings. And I’d like, if it’s possible, to meet with each student at least once during the
semester.

Some of the work is likely to be familiar to many students—William Faulkner’s “Barn
Burning,” Katherine Mansfield’s “Daughters of the Late Colonel,” Franz Kafka’s
“Metamorphosis” and John Cheever’s “Goodbye My Brother,” for example. But we’ll also
look at work that I expect will be less familiar—fiction by Eileen Chang, Peter Taylor, Bruno Schulz, Jane Bowles, and Dezső Kosztolányi.

If you find a slow pace frustrating, or if your objective is to cover a great deal of material or to read within a historical or theoretical framework, this course would be a very poor fit for you! Very poor—I’m serious!

Joseph Fasano

The Contemporary Long Poem

(FICTION)  Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm

When Aristotle offered his enduring definitions of poetic genres, he formalized a tradition in which the epic was understood as the poem of length, and he found narrative at its heart. 2100 years later, Poe infamously declared that “a long poem does not exist... [and] the phrase “a long poem” is simply a flat contradiction in terms... If, at any time, any very long poems were popular in reality—which I doubt—it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.” The question for Poe was not simply one of fashion. At the heart of his complaint is the question of whether a poem of length can sustain itself without narrative “unity,” which is to ask whether a long poem is possible in the lyric mode. Whitman, true to his character, avoided the question altogether by declaring Leaves of Grass a work of nature, organic and ever changing, more subject to the aesthetic laws of nature than of art. Still, we are left with profound questions about genre and the standards by which we measure the aesthetic success of a long poem. Through a close study of contemporary long poems, this course will ask several questions: (1) Just what do we mean by “long poem,” especially in the lyric mode?  (2) What are the differences between epic and “long lyric”? (3) How are narrative and narrative fragmentation used in the structuring of the long poem? (4) In the absence of linear narration, what are the structural principles by which a long poem lives or dies? Our course of study will include analysis of prosody, image, voice, persona, and cultural context. Each week, we’ll study one long poem in depth, and students will be asked to write a one-page response paper due at the beginning of each class. These will be used to generate our larger discussions. There will also be two analytical papers: a midterm (5-7 pages) and a final (10-12); alternately, students will have the opportunity to submit creative work in response to the readings and discussions to satisfy the writing requirement. Readings will include works by A. R. Ammons, John Ashbery, Anne Carson, Kwame Dawes, T. S. Eliot, Robison Jeffers, Bernadette Mayer, Alice Notley, George Oppen, Claudia Rankine, Frank Stanford, C. D. Wright, and others.
Monica Ferrell

Word and Image: Reading and Writing Contemporary Poetry for Prose Writers

(CROSS-GENRE) Tue., 10am-12pm

Open to Fiction and Nonfiction students only. This is a workshop-format course in the reading and writing of poetry for students of fiction and creative nonfiction. With a focus on contemporary poetry, we will discuss various approaches to how to read a poem, and examine a range of aesthetics including modernism, formalism, confessional writing, the New York School, and hybridity. We will also discuss free and formal verse, the prose poem, and the lyric essay. Topics explored will include music and sound, word choice, imagery, line-break and stanza-break, repetition, syntax, silence and the unsaid, and poetic closure. We will attempt to write a new poem each week, as we consider work by such authors as Wallace Stevens, John Berryman, Sylvia Plath, John Ashbery, Claudia Rankine, Inger Christensen, Terrance Hayes, Cynthia Cruz, and Safiya Sinclair.

B.K. Fischer

The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This course aims to convince the skeptic that even if Gertrude Stein was mistaken in saying “I really do not know that anything has ever been more exciting than diagramming sentences,” grammar is at least the second most fulfilling human pursuit. Fundamental to our exploration will be a study of grammatical terminology and principles as an anatomy lab for language—a method for exposing its inner workings, mechanisms, and connective tissues to understand more fully its capacities and effects. This technical scrutiny will give rise to discussion of a variety of topics relevant to creative practice in poetry and prose, including patterns of syntax, point of view, polysemy, closure, disjunction, the non sequitur, parataxis and hypotaxis, deixis, the subjunctive, vernaculars, and code-switching. Our analysis of grammar will dovetail with theoretical perspectives beyond subject and predicate, drawing insights from linguistics, cultural studies, feminist theory, race theory, ethics, activist politics, aesthetics, and media studies. We will dissect and revel in sentences by Virginia Woolf, Claudia Rankine, Henry James, Nathaniel Mackey, Marilyynne Robinson, Emily Dickinson, Teju Cole, Jorie Graham, Taiye Selasi, Layli Long Soldier, and Vampire Weekend, among many other writers, and read essays by Nietzsche, M. NourbeSe Philip, Cecilia Vicuña, Gloria Anzaldúa, Hélène Cixous, Giorgio Agamben, Lyn Hejinian, and others. Taking the form of a sutra—texts threaded together to build a working manual—the course will focus in every class on how grammatical ideas are vital to writing praxis. Participants will write seven one-page responses to extend the seminar’s conversation, one of which must include graphic or visual (or any non-linguistic) elements, and a final paper of approximately five pages.
Joshua Furst

The Clock, The Calendar, The Almanac: Time in Fiction

(FICTION)  Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

When a writer thinks about the relationship between time and his or her work, more must be considered than just when in the timeline of history the story is set. He or she must also contend with the narrative time of the story. Nearly every formal decision the writer makes affects and is affected by how time will operate. Thus, controlling the way a story or novel navigates time is one of the most crucial tasks of the writer. Whether to tell the story chronologically or in bookends, whether to place the narrative in retrospect or in the immediacy of an unrelenting present action, whether to present the action in scene or in summary, these among many other time-related decisions have profound effects on the formal possibilities of the story as well as the experience that will be imparted on the reader.

In this course, we will explore the role time-management plays in the formal organization of narrative. We’ll study the various tools writers have at their disposal by which to control and manipulate and sometimes distort the passage of time in their fiction. Through close readings and formal breakdowns of short stories, we will examine some of the ways a story’s positioning in relation to time affects other elements of story. Students will be asked to write a brief story of their own in which the manipulation of narrative time affects the reader’s experience.

Readings may include writing by Harold Brodkey, John Cheever, Julio Cortazar, Don DeLillo, Flannery O’Conner, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Yukio Mishima, and Susan Sontag, among others.

Rivka Galchen

Not Exactly Historical Fiction

(FICTION)  Mon., 10am-12pm

In this course we’ll consider the play of history and fiction from the perspective of working artists. Looking at stories, novels, plays and poems, we’ll consider how the past gets used variously as an estrangement, a looking glass, a cameo, a counterfactual world—even as a vision of the future. Among the texts we’ll consider are: Mumbo-Jumbo by Ishmael Reed, The Visitation by Jenny Erpenbeck, The Man in the High Castle by Philip K. Dick, Michael Kohlhaas by Heinrich von Kleist, The Hearing Trumpet by Leonora Carrington, Memoirs of a Polar Bear by Yoko Tawada, and Distant Star by Roberto Bolaño.
Alan Gilbert

Modern and Contemporary Poetry, Part One
(1900–1950): The Major Poets and Poetics

(POETRY)  Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This seminar will examine some of the major poets and literary movements of the first half of the twentieth century: from William Butler Yeats to Marianne Moore, from Wallace Stevens to H. D., from Gertrude Stein to Langston Hughes, from Muriel Rukeyser to Robert Frost, from Hart Crane to Gwendolyn Brooks, and more. We will also read non-Anglophone poets such as Federico García Lorca, Anna Akhmatova, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Aimé Césaire. In attempting to gain a broad overview of the first half of the twentieth century, we will discuss these writers against the background of literary debates of the period, as well as the historical and political conditions impacting both poets and poetics. We will look to connect the themes and poetic lineages discussed in class with contemporary examples and our own writing. The writing requirement is a twelve-to-fifteen-page creative portfolio or a critical paper of equal length. (Part Two of the class, offered in the Spring, will cover the years 1950–2000.)

Benjamin Hale

Imagining Nonhuman Consciousness

(FICTION)  Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Philosopher Thomas Nagel asked, “What is it like to be a bat?” Ultimately, he determined the question unanswerable: A bat’s experience of the world is so alien to our own that it is beyond the human understanding of subjective experience. That’s arguable. But it is true at least that a bat’s experience—or that of any other nonhuman consciousness—is not inaccessible to human imagination. In this course we will read and discuss a wide variety of texts, approaching the subject of nonhuman consciousness through literature, philosophy, and science. We will read works that attempt to understand the experiences of apes, panthers, rats, ticks, elephants, octopuses, lobsters, cows, bats, monsters, puppets, computers, and eventually, zombies. Course reading may include Descartes, Kafka, Rilke, Jakob von Uexküll, Heinrich von Kleist, Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Patricia Highsmith, John Gardner’s Grendel, J.A. Baker’s The Peregrine, Eduardo Kohn’s How Forests Think, David Foster Wallace, Temple Grandin, Frans de Waal, Jane Goodall, Thomas Nagel, John Searle, Susan Datch, E. O. Wilson, Giorgio Agamben, and Bennett Sims’s A Questionable Shape, among others, in addition to a viewing of 2001: A Space Odyssey, Danny Boyle’s 28 Days Later, and possibly other films. This is also a craft class; a major component of the class will be incorporating these ideas into our creative writing.
Brigid Hughes

**Editing and the Writer**

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This course will examine the past, present, and future of literary magazines, from the perspectives of both the editor and the writer. We will analyze specific issues by magazines such as *The Paris Review, Granta, Monkey Business, Noon, Evergreen Review, Callaloo, Triquarterly*, and others. We will discuss the elements that distinguish a magazine, including unifying themes, layout and design, and criteria for the selection process. The editorial relationships between known editors and writers will also be examined. Assignments will include exercises in editing, graphics selection, and assessing work from various sources. By the end of the seminar you will develop a mission statement and create a sample issue. This seminar is designed for writers who are interested in the editorial side of publishing, and how editor-writer relationships would shape their work.

Leslie Jamison

**Archive Fever**

(NONFICTION) Tue., 10am-12pm

Archives are records of minds and bodies and secrets. They are full of surprises: the cigarette burns marking John Berryman’s 12-step inventories; the jam-sticky fingerprints of Marilynne Robinson’s toddler son in her composition books, where novel fragments live alongside grocery lists; the instructions to Jean Rhys’s caregivers to put more ice cubes in her evening tumblers of whiskey, the postcards sent from 19th-century sanitarium patients to beloveds living elsewhere. In this course, we will be exploring the allure of the archives—their enchantments, their tyrannies, their obfuscations, their practicalities, their labyrinthine passageways—and thinking about how creative work can incorporate archival research in surprising and dynamic ways. Archives are necessarily incomplete, and their gaps are just as resonant as their records. In addition to reading critical and creative work that draws from archival research, we will be visiting a number of archives across New York City, including the Morgan Library, the New York Public Library, the Schomburg Center, the Fales Library at NYU, and the New York Academy of Medicine. Over the course of the semester, each student will produce a piece of creative writing that draws on sustained engagement with a particular set of archival materials. Our readings will range across genres—creative nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and scholarship—and may include Kiki Petrosino, Jacques Derrida, M. NourbeSe Philip, Karen Green, Chris Kraus, Janet Malcolm, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Maggie Nelson, Saidiya Hartman, Robert Hayden, Ander Monson, Arlette Farge, and Mark Nowak.

Please note: Because six of our classes will be happening off-site, at various archives across the city, please make sure you are not taking any classes that start directly after ours.
Margo Jefferson

Third Form Narratives

(NONFICTION) Wed., 10am-12pm

This seminar will focus on works that combine art forms, genres, and styles in striking ways. Works that join fact and fiction to interrogate their uses and implications. Works in which image and text combine to create a third interactive language for the reader. Essays that join personal reflection to arts and cultural criticism, drawing on research and imagination, the vernacular and the formal. Poems grounded in historical documents. The assemblage or collage, created from notebook entries, lists, quotations, footnotes, and indexes, that achieves its coherence through fragments and associations, found and original texts.

Alice Sola Kim

Surprise

(FICTION) Wed., 10am-12pm

The concept of surprise in fiction—the unexpected, the twisty, the misleading—is often unfairly maligned, viewed as a trashy and disposable special effect. But whether it’s wholesome or not, surprise can provide a powerful and unique pleasure that manifests in a great variety of ways. Surprise is delight; it is shock; it is horror; it can even approach awe. In this class, we will be examining the multifarious joys of surprise. We’ll be studying it in sources both expected and unexpected, and learning how we can apply it in our own work. We’ll discuss how surprise shows up not only in plot but in character and setting and so on, and how the effects of work that surprise us can still endure with rereading (and watching) and transform over time. Authors we’ll read will include: Taeko Kono, Richard Matheson, Nafissa Thompson-Spires, Alice Munro, and Henri Bergson.

Binnie Kirshenbaum

The Excruciating

(FICTION) Wed., 5pm-7pm

The worst is not so long as we can say, “This is the worst.”  
—King Lear, Shakespeare

Our immediate response to pain is most often expressed not in language but in sound: a scream, a howl, or a whimper. To best describe and comprehend physical pain we rely on shared experience—a toothache, a skinned knee—and on familiarity with our own nerve endings and pain receptors. But still, we can’t really know someone else’s pain. So how, then,
do we even begin to convey the experience of a pain that has no locus? When the answer to the question, “Where does it hurt?” is, “Nowhere and everywhere,” how do we, as writers, communicate the excruciating pains of despair, failure, loneliness, grief, humiliation, shame, regret, and rage? In this seminar, we will examine the ways and means in which writers give voice to excruciation that is lived as an infinite and silent scream, howl, or whimper.

To convey and to know unarticulated pain requires that we identify with these fictional characters in the traditional definition of literary identification; that is not to see ourselves reflected in the characters, but to transcend ourselves to see and feel what it’s like to be them. The works we will read have been selected solely for variety of excruciation, for the different experiences of bleeding without evidence of blood (and also because the novels aren’t doorstoppers).

We will read works by Anton Chekov, Sherwood Anderson, Mavis Gallant, Delmore Schwartz, Flannery O’Connor, Natalia Ginzberg, Richard Yates, Alice Munro, Claudia Rankine, Evan S. Connell, Horatio Castillo-Moya, Brian Moore, Deborah Eisenberg, Clarice Lispector, Hisham Matar, Nathanael West, Juliana Wang, Toni Cade Bambara, among others.

Students will be required to write one creative work influenced by the reading, which will be workshoped.

Nicole Krauss

This Place and No Place

(FICTION) Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Who am I? What do I want? Where have I been, and where am I going? And what is this place? Of these essential questions posed in most novels, this class will focus on the last. We will explore the ways in which place is used, investigated, imbued with meaning and feeling, harnessed to plot in novels like To the End of the Land (David Grossman), Pond (Claire-Louise Bennett), and The Summer Book (Tova Jansson). And we’ll look at works such as The Passion According to GH (Clarice Lispector), The Metamorphosis (Franz Kafka), and A Journey Around My Room (Xavier de Maistre), which take place entirely in the intimacy of a room, and see how they use—and at times transcend—place. How does the question What is this place? support the other essential questions literature poses? We’ll also look at two nonfiction works—Landmarks (Robert MacFarlane), exploring the relationship between nature, language, attentiveness, and wonder, and Species of Spaces and Other Pieces (George Perec), a reflection on how we occupy different forms of space: the page, the bed, the room, the town, the world…
Paul La Farge

**Horror Fiction**

(FICTION) Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Pleasure is one part of the aesthetic experience of fiction; another part is terror. This course will be a survey of major works of horror fiction from the 19th century through the present. We’ll pay particular attention to the techniques of writing horror, and the uses to which fiction writers have put them, from psychological examination through social critique and beyond. Works will be read by Poe, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Henry James, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Arthur Machen, H.P. Lovecraft, Vladimir Nabokov, Rachel Ingalls, Robert Aickman, Brian Evenson, Caitlin Kiernan, and others.

Victor LaValle

**Building a Better Novel**

(FICTION) Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

When I first started writing novels, my method went like this: start with the first sentence and... eventually finish the book. I had no real goals in mind, no strategies for telling my story, instead I moved through the process with nothing but inspiration. Also I cribbed a lot from the great novels I’d read before. In other words, I had no plan. I didn’t think I needed one. I was wrong. So this seminar is, in a sense, all about planning. It’s part seminar, part lab. We’ll spend the semester reading a few novels and taking them apart on a structural level so we can understand how and why they work. But mostly we’ll be talking about the novel you want to write, and we’ll work together to make sure you have a strategy in place before you begin. This course won’t be for everyone, certainly not for those who buck against the very idea of structure and design. But for those who feel there’s value in thinking clearly about what you’re going to do before you try and do it, this course will help a great deal.

Gideon Lewis-Kraus

**Reporting Non-News**

(NONFICTION) Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This seminar looks at information-gathering for writers, with particular emphasis on non-news—that is, information that cannot exclusively or interestingly be gathered inside one’s house, via email, or over the telephone. It examines attitudes about and practices of reporting in light of the assumption that what people say and do explicitly is not necessarily of greater relevance than how they said or did it, what they were wearing at the time, what the weather was like that day, and how the listener happened to feel about what was said or done. The class will dwell on actual information-gathering skills—which
approaches tend to yield greater or lesser quantities of the varieties of useful information—but will (for the most part) reject the following ideas: that reporting and writing are distinct rather than interrelated elements of the process; that reportorial skills are innate, or are trade secrets, or can be dismissed as “mere” practical techniques of no use to the pure of heart; and that reporting for memoir or first-person rumination or fiction is somehow different in kind from reporting more traditional magazine stories. Readings will in turn be drawn from contemporary feature journalism, sociology, fiction, and possibly poetry, and may or may not include such writers as Grace Paley, Larissa MacFarquhar, Howard S. Becker, Janet Malcolm, Jia Tolentino, Ben Lerner, Nikole Hannah-Jones, Anne Carson, Katherine Boo, Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Kenneth Tynan, Elif Batuman, Rachel Aviv, and Tracy Kidder.

Phillip Lopate

**Studies in the Essay**

**(NONFICTION)**

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

We will be examining the development of the essay form, through the great line of essayists in the English language. Starting in eighteenth-century England, with Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson, Jonathan Swift, Addison & Steele, through the great nineteenth-century practitioners, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, R. L. Stevenson, Thomas De Quincey, and John Ruskin, and the twentieth-century masters, such as Max Beerbohm, G.K. Chesterton, Virginia Woolf, and George Orwell, then hopping over the Atlantic to Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, H. L. Mencken, James Thurber, E.B. White, Mary McCarthy, James Baldwin, and M.F.K. Fisher. We will be looking at how the same writers handle personal and impersonal essays, memoir pieces, and literary criticism, to investigate the techniques of narrative structure and suspense in essays, and how the mysterious projection of authorial personality traverses any and all situations.

Erroll McDonald

**William Faulkner and World Fiction**

**(FICTION)**

Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez unabashedly claims William Faulkner as “my master,” says that “Faulkner is present in all the novels of Latin America,” and mischievously insists that “The Hamlet is the best South American novel ever written.” Since the 1950s, other major writers from around the world have similarly trumpeted the crucial influence of Faulkner on their writing. Why? What about Faulkner excited their imagination and inspired their work, allowing them to achieve their own singularities? This course aims to elucidate not only Faulkner’s formal inventions and literary techniques but his social and moral concerns, so as to examine how they inform such writers as Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique), Gabriel
Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Antonio Lobo Antunes (Portugal), Toni Morrison (United States), Juan Rulfo (Mexico), and Kateb Yacine (Algeria).

Among the works we will read are: Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!, As I Lay Dying, Light in August, Sanctuary, and The Sound and the Fury*; Chamoiseau’s *Solibo Magnificent*; Garcia Marquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch*; Lobo Antunes’s *Act of the Damned*; Morrison’s *Beloved*; Rulfo’s *Pedro Paramo*; and Yacine’s *Nedjma*. The course will conclude with a reading of selections from *Faulkner, Mississippi*, meditations upon the writer by Martinican poet and critic Edouard Glissant.

The course requirements are: a short (three-to-five-page) piece of literary criticism on a clearly defined topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor—this essay will be orally presented to the class—and a twelve-to-fifteen-page final exercise in imitation of any writer covered during the semester.

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**Ben Metcalf**

**An Earnest Look at Irony**

(FICTION) Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

In this seminar, we will discuss works by several accomplished writers of fiction, and a few crackerjack poets, in order to determine what, precisely, we mean when we talk about irony on the page and what, precisely, we mean when we talk about earnestness. How are these very different effects (and affects) achieved? What are their benefits to the student author? What pitfalls, perceived or otherwise, attend the allure of each? What is the relationship of humor to earnestness, and of seriousness to irony? Is the absence of irony really the same thing as earnestness? Does the absence of earnestness somehow necessitate irony?

With an eye toward technique, we will explore these and further issues among the sentences and strategies of those who fall all along, though often refuse to stay put on, the earnest-ironic continuum. Students will be expected to write two short-short (two-to-five-page) stories throughout the semester, exploring for themselves this treacherous but eminently skiable slope.

With readings from Walter Abish, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), John Cheever, James Thurber, Raymond Carver, Veronica Geng, Donald Barthelme, Mark Twain, T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Vladimir Nabokov, Stevie Smith, Herman Melville, Samuel Beckett, James Baldwin, Brendan Behan, James Joyce, Anthony Burgess, Alice Munro, Zadie Smith, William Trevor, Cormac McCarthy, Flannery O’Connor, Max Beerbohm, Margaret Atwood, Padgett Powell, Saki, W.E.B. Du Bois, Arthur Miller, Bruce Chatwin, David Foster Wallace, Paul West, J.M. Coetzee, Katherine Anne Porter, and others.
Lincoln Michel

**Structure and Its Discontents**

(FICTION)  
Mon., 10am-12pm

How do we tell a straight story? And how do we tell a bent one? How does form inform (or deform) our work? This course will focus on the shapes of stories, exploring how different structures open different opportunities for our characters, plots, and ideas. We’ll look at classic storytelling theories from different cultures alongside postmodern departures, Oulipian constraints, and hybrid forms. (First we’ll climb Freytag’s pyramid, then we’ll blow it up.) The course will think of structure and form not as means of containing story, but as means of generating new ideas and possibilities.

We’ll explore the strategies we study in regular in-class exercises. Readings may include:

- Italo Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveler*
- Renata Adler’s *Speedboat*
- Salvador Plascencia’s *The People of Paper*
- Toni Morrison’s *Sula*
- Kobo Abe’s *The Box Man*
- Valeria Luiselli’s *The Story of My Teeth*
- Nicholson Baker’s *The Mezzanine*

Plus essays by Jane Alison, George Saunders, and Robert McKee, and short stories by Donald Barthelme, Samanta Schweblin, Brian Evenson, and Carmen Maria Machado.

Deborah Paredez

**Witness, Record, Document: Poetry and Testimony**

(CROSS-GENRE)  
Wed., 10:10am-12pm

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. This is an undergraduate seminar open to graduate MFA students.

Lee Siegel

Criticism as a Way of Life

(NONFICTION) Wed., 2pm-4pm

Before embarking on serious business, a joke is often a good way to begin. A man and his wife are making love, but the wife is distant; her mind is elsewhere. “Darling,” the husband asks, “Is there someone else?” The wife sighs. “There must be,” she says.

Or, to put it very differently, we turn to art because we know that there is something beyond, or in the spaces between, the life we are living. This is why the Victorian poet and critic Matthew Arnold famously defined poetry as “criticism of life,” though he might as well have been talking about all art. But if art is criticism of life, then criticism, if done well, can rise to the power of art.

In this course, we will focus on the act of writing critically as an act of living decisively: an act of making judgments, of distinguishing and discriminating. We could not function without judging, distinguishing, discriminating. Writing criticism is really the ideal form of one of our most basic processes of living. Some people take boxing lessons to help them prevail at the office. Studying the practice of criticism can help us, as writers, to approach life, as the material for our work, with greater insight, clarity, and nuance.

We will approach criticism in the broadest sense and not limit it to a particular form of criticism. We will study criticism on a continuum, spanning genres: literary, art, film, music, dance, architecture, TV, social, cultural, and political. All these are different “ways of seeing”—to borrow a phrase from the great British art critic, John Berger; they are how various people, in various disciplines, make sense of the reality we all share.

Some of the critics we will read might be, in no particular order, Edmund Wilson, Mary McCarthy, Harold Cruse, W.H. Auden, Arlene Croce, Ada Louise Huxtable, Lionel Trilling, Manny Farber, James Agee, Gore Vidal, Elizabeth Hardwick, Ellen Willis, Ann Power, Helen Vendler, Harold Bloom, Dwight Macdonald, Karen Wilkin, Robert Hughes, Hilton Kramer, Gary Giddins, Nat Hentoff, Pauline Kael, Stanley Crouch, Miles Davis, Joan Didion, Albert Murray, Nelson George, and Greil Marcus. We will begin with Renata Adler’s great attack on Pauline Kael—a sometime critic taking on a full-time critic, where nothing less than the meaning and function of criticism itself is at stake. Then we might read Miles Davis and Charles Mingus making caustic criticisms of each other—two porous artists suddenly transformed into two ungiving critics in an instance that illuminates the different wellsprings of art and criticism.

The guiding criteria for choosing which critics we read will reflect the values that will guide the seminar. The criticism, even the most negative, must be a form of understanding
whatever it is that is being criticized. The critic must write with a sense of style. The piece of criticism must rise to an expressive power beyond being merely a “review.” And the critic must be funny, witty, ironic, or at the very least, diverting. Like the greatest art, criticism, if it is to be effective, must, at some level, be as entertaining as it is edifying.

One five-to-ten-page work of criticism, in whatever genre you choose, is required.

Ross Simonini

**Process Writing**

(CROSS-GENRE) Wed., 2pm-4pm

The act of writing is often mythologized, romanticized, or dismissed as simply a means to an end. But writing is undeniably the product of environment, method, mood, and lifestyle. This course will consider process as a primary lens for writing and reading. We will focus on written experiments by students and literature that investigates the experience of its own creation. Readings will include work by surrealists who use “automatic” methods to reveal the unconscious, poets who seek to capture states of enlightenment (or intoxication), novelists who employ extreme conditions to achieve unexpected results, and visual artists who produce documents of their “marginal activities.” Students will respond to readings by inventing and applying new processes to their own work. The class will attempt to increase awareness of how everything we do affects what appears on the page.

Kimi Traube

**Deeply Disturbing: Horror and Dark Fairy Tales from Around the World**

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION) Mon., 6pm-8pm

Statues that flood houses, literary characters who slip from their texts to knife their readers, enormous insects inhabiting old ladies’ legs—there is a particular kind of human horror which cannot be contained within the bounds of the real. In this course, we will look at short stories (primarily in translation) from around the world that blur the boundaries between magic and the mundane, real and surreal, world and page. As we consider each piece, we will examine where the locus of horror for each story lies, and what it may stand in for. Special attention will be given to the politics of horror, and to considering all the ways in which we can approach topics that trouble us as readers and as human beings.

Monsters made of our own flesh, demon lovers playing all-too-familiar parts, daughters who transform into something unbearable—what is it that drives authors beyond realism in the invocation of intimately human horror? Rape, war, betrayal, and murder regretfully fit neatly into the “real world”; why, then, do authors from around the globe craft stories that explode
the real in order to reckon with these all-too-familiar aspects of human experience? We will consider the particulars of how each author constructs the horror at the heart of the story, as well as the interpersonal and political ramifications of those choices. Is there a common thread across languages and cultures, or is each invocation of human horror—in its queasy, eerie expression—unique? If horror is the disturbing combination of repulsion and attraction, what is it that draws us to story forms like these, as readers and as writers? How does moving beyond the bonds of realism allow these writers to summon something unbearably real?

Texts are variable but will likely include work from Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Julio Cortázar (Argentina/Argentina), Ludmilla Petrushevskaya (Russia), Rosario Ferré (Puerto Rico), Haruki Murakami (Japan), Franz Kafka (Austro-Hungarian Empire/Germany), Hasam Blasim (Iraq), Pauline Melville (Guyana), Carmen Maria Machado (U.S.), Marosa di Giorgio (Uruguay), Kelly Link (U.S.), Samanta Schweblin (Argentina), Rasha Abbas (Syria), Etgar Keret (Israel), and others.

Karen Van Dyck & Xiaolu Guo

The Hybrid Voice: Comparative Diasporas and Translation
(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION) Thu., 4:10pm-6pm

This seminar will focus on the theory and practice of translation from the perspective of comparative diasporas and the hybrid voice. Students are encouraged to come to the seminar with a text from any language they wish to translate. We will read key essays on translation focusing on the issues of language and script in relation to migration, uprooting, and imagined community. Rather than foregrounding a single case study, the syllabus is organized around the proposition that any consideration of diaspora requires a consideration of comparative and overlapping diasporas, and as a consequence a confrontation with creolization and translation. We will look at a range of literary representations of language-crossing and -mixing, especially in terms of their lessons for the practice of translation (including Greek, Chinese, French, Latin, Italian, and Albanian). The final weeks of the course will be devoted to a practicum where students will get a chance to workshop their own translation projects.

Lara Vapnyar

Building a Scene
(FICTION) Wed., 10am-12pm

Individual scenes are important building blocks of any prose narrative, yet the craft of designing a scene is often neglected by aspiring writers. In this class we will study all the aspects of designing a successful scene: setting, inner plot, inner structure, spotlight on the characters, P.O.V., choreography of physical movement, dialogue. We will study how to write
sex scenes, death scenes, party scenes, battle scenes, nature scenes. The readings will include Tolstoy, Ferrante, Bolano, Proulx, Munro, Waters, and Wallace.

Wendy S. Walters

Write the Anthropocene in Environmental Time

(NONFICTION) Wed., 2pm-4pm

Using Lauret Savoy’s groundbreaking memoir Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape as a core text, students will uncover histories by engaging with the physical landscapes that have shaped their personhood. By combining observations based in techniques of geology, botany, geography, climate, animal studies, and anthropology with techniques in creative writing students will produce new work that reflects on their connections to the environment and the cultures that emerge within it. Students will also have the chance to imagine a future in which their relationship to the natural world is more carefully integrated.

Lynn Xu

Hallucinations

(POETRY) Fri., 10am-12pm

Hallucination: < late Latin al····cin·····tion-em (all-, hall-), noun of action < al····cin·····, meaning “to wander in the mind.” Earliest use by Thomas Browne, 1646: “If vision be abolished it is called cecitas, or blindness, if depraved and receive its objects erroneously, Hallucination” (Pseudodoxia Epidemica III. xviii. 153).

Hallucination thus, according to Browne, is not only a kind of false vision, but a seeing which is “depraved”: perverse, morally corrupt (see use of “depraved” in Paradise Lost, 1667: “So all shall turn degenerate, all deprav’d”). In this course, we ask: Can we situate this depraved seeing as a kind of historical seeing? This vision of the subject, this ancient, forever untimely subject of history, as a homeland for the abject and absurd, where deviancy flowers? How is historical material here made—figured/disfigured by loss, desire, violence, suffering, exhaustion, death; by restlessness and the unbearable, abyssal, vertigo of living inside time? Where is the aperture of experience? The apparitions, which partition the night, its many voices, bodies which are forgotten, and then remembered, why? What is the time of writing, of reading? This course goes a little back and a little forward between the two world wars, hoping to track an itinerary of historical material, its candescence, between situations of mourning and mystical experience. Students will be asked to keep a reading notebook, sign up to lead discussion on texts, and make a body of creative work (five pages at midterm and five pages for the final, both accompanied by brief critical meditations engaging course material). Readings will include works by Friedrich Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke, Martin Heidegger, Marina Tsvetaeva, Boris Pasternak, Charles Baudelaire, Karl Marx, Louis Auguste Blanquis,
Walter Benjamin, George Bataille, Clarice Lispector, Simone Weil, Antonin Artaud, Tatsumi Hijikata, Marguerite Duras, Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, Ingeborg Bachmann, Paul Celan, Suzanne Césaire, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Jean Genet, Etel Adnan, Jalal Toufic, and others.

Kate Zambreno

Disobedient Texts

(NONFICTION)  Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm

What if we thought of exciting or visionary writing, not as working according to some sort of formula, but instead as refusing to follow expectations and conventions? In this seminar we will read and celebrate nonfiction texts that are adamantly disobedient, written with a spirit of adventure and experimentation. We will be thinking seriously through form and fragmentation, of hybrid creatures that often transgress genre constraints. Although we will be considering the writing we read as somehow engaging with the tradition and processes of the essay, in other words, writing as thinking and feeling, most works we read will not be lyric essays, with their expected astericked pauses and flourishes. Instead we will be reading texts that contain within them the spirit and energy of failure, that we will think of as nervous systems, notebooks for ghosts, body maps, lectures and short talks, assemblages, trance journals, and strange biographies. Works that are alternatively obsessed, radical, digressive, embodied, anemic, philosophical, ecstatic, uncanny, unruly, poetic, relentlessly contemporary, and haunted by history. For full books we will be reading Renee Gladman’s Calamities, Bhanu Kapil’s Humanimal, Moyra Davey’s Les Goddesses/Hemlock Forest, W.G. Sebald’s Rings of Saturn, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s Dictee, Sophie Calle’s The Address Book, T. Fleischmann’s Time is the Thing a Body Moves Through, and Kate Briggs’ This Little Art, along with shorter texts that might include Anne Carson, Roland Barthes, Lisa Robertson, Jenny Zhang, Anne Boyer, Gerald Murnane, John Cage, Aisha Sabatini Sloan, Walter Benjamin, Fleur Jaeggy, Charlie Fox, Edouard Glissant, Elizabeth Grosz, Hervé Guibert, Sofia Samatar, Lydia Davis, Susan Howe, Jorge Luis Borges, and David Wojnarowicz. Course expectations include regular “responses” to the material, a visit to the Whitney Biennial, a presentation of a disobedient object, and an extension of one of the responses for a final text.
LITERARY TRANSLATION WORKSHOP

Matvei Yankelevich  Wed., 4:30pm-7pm
Katrine Øgaard Jensen  Fri., 10:30am-1pm

These workshops are open to students translating from all languages at all levels, from novice to experienced, and within or across all genres: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. They are designed to introduce or help refine the tools necessary to be an active and engaged translator as well as a rigorous reader of translated literary works, to hone your editing skills across literary genres, and to demonstrate how the art and craft of literary translation can expand your practice as a writer. We will have lively discussions about the role of the translator today, with special attention to translation practice as it intersects with questions of race, migration, and national scripts of exclusion/belonging.

Participants may come with a project already in mind, or may work with the instructor and the group to select projects early on that will be workshopped over the course of the term. The focus will be on close examinations of nuances of style and voice, linguistic play, and methods of representing linguistic and literary innovation in English while actively considering the nature and sociopolitical context of “the original.”

Fluency in a language other than English is not required. A good reading knowledge of a second language is desirable, but students with basic second-language skills who are interested in understanding translation processes and how translation can enhance the craft of writing are also encouraged to register—and to continue improving their second-language skills. Ideally, we will have a group that is committed to examining translation as a tool to dig deeper as a writer, and where notions of expertise and/or mastery are secondary to the willingness to explore and experiment. Readings in translation theory and methodology will be assigned throughout the term based on the different languages and interests students bring to class and the nature of the projects in the group.
Joshua Cohen

Long Century, Short Novels

Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Covering the totality of last century’s fiction in the course of a single semester is folly, but then so is a writer’s life. The class will read thirteen short novels written during the long twentieth century, none of them, incidentally, by an American. Class time will be spent discussing these books in terms of, but not limited to, their “Voice,” “Point of View,” tense-deployment, time-manipulation, mood, pacing, etc.

The books are:

_Hunger_ by Knut Hamsun (1890)
_Death in Venice_ by Thomas Mann (1912)
_Mrs Dalloway_ by Virginia Woolf (1925)
_Glory_ by Vladimir Nabokov (1932)
_Weights and Measures_ by Joseph Roth (1934)
_The Blind Owl_ by Sadegh Hedayat (1936)
_The Ministry of Fear_ by Graham Greene (1943)
_Pedro Paramo_ by Juan Rulfo (1955)
_Do You Hear Them?_ by Nathalie Sarraute (1973)
_A Cup of Rage_ by Raduan Nassar (1978)
_The Pyramid_ by Ismail Kadare (1992)
_Dolly City_ by Orly Castel-Bloom (1993)
_My Heart Hemmed In_ by Marie NDiaye (2007)

Richard Locke

Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction

Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm

A survey of criticism, reportage, polemics, memoirs, and meditations from the 1920’s to the present that explores the variety and flexibility of nonfiction styles and genres. The reading will include complete works and selections from:

_The Edmund Wilson Reader_, ed. Lewis M. Dabney (DaCapo)
_The Common Reader: First Series, Annotated Edition_, Virginia Woolf (Harcourt)
_A Room of One’s Own, Annotated Edition_, Virginia Woolf (Harcourt)
_Goodbye to Berlin_, Christopher Isherwood (New Directions)
Facing Unpleasant Facts: Narrative Essays, George Orwell (Harcourt)
Homage to Catalonia, George Orwell (Harcourt ISBN 978-0-544-38204-6)
Survival in Auschwitz, Primo Levi (Touchstone/S&S)
Speak, Memory, Vladimir Nabokov (Vintage)
Essays of E.B. White (Harper)
Up in the Old Hotel, Joseph Mitchell (Vintage)
We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live, Joan Didion (Everyman)
Literary Occasions, V.S. Naipaul (Vintage)
The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston (Vintage)

Alice Quinn

A Cornucopia of American Poetry

Wed., 5pm-7pm

Starting with poems by Walt Whitman to be read in the bicentennial year of his birth and poems by Emily Dickinson, another 19th C. American genius, this class will explore—with the huge boon of eight celebrated visiting poets—classic poetry from Whitman and Dickinson to the work of some of the most renowned (and a few lesser known but eminently exciting and influential) 20th Century American poets. The schedule is as follows, with a list of reading and requirements of the course below.

September 4: Alice Quinn on Walt Whitman
September 11: Alice Quinn on Emily Dickinson
September 18: Alice Quinn on Robert Frost & Elizabeth Bishop
September 25: Eileen Myles on Gwendolyn Brooks
October 2: Matthew Zapruder on Frank O’Hara
October 9: Atsuro Riley on James Merrill
October 16: Jeffrey Yang on Lorine Niedecker and Theresa Cha
October 23: Forrest Gander on C.D. Wright
October 30: Alice Quinn on Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich
November 6: Terence Hayes on Wallace Stevens and Etheridge Knight
November 13: Edward Hirsch on W.S. Merwin
November 20: Rachel Eliza Griffths on June Jordan and AI
December 4: Alice Quinn on The Black Poets, edited by Dudley Rand

Requirements: Two two-page papers due October 9 and November 13 on any poet’s work which we’ve discussed or will discuss during the term, or on a thematic perspective you’ve developed over the course of the class plus forty lines of poetry to be memorized and recited to me during my office hour before class anytime during the term. If memorization is impossible, we can have a conversation about the poems instead, but memorization is emphatically recommended.
MASTER CLASSES

Matthew Burgess

Serious Play: Teaching Imaginative Writing to Young People

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 17 - Nov. 21
Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm

This master class is designed for writers of all genres who are interested in sharing their love of writing with young people. Children understand that writing is a magical power, and they take pleasure in learning how to do it. But by the time they turn up in high school or college-level composition classes, many have decided that writing is a painful, if necessary, chore. One of the aims of the writer-teacher is to reverse this trend by creating classroom environments in which students (re)discover the creative, expressive, and intellectual potential of language. The point is not to follow rules, avoid mistakes, and fill pages with sentences that hold little or no personal meaning. On the contrary, writing is an act of the mind and the imagination, and it can draw us out of ourselves in ways that are surprising, challenging, even fun.

In addition to exploring pedagogical theories, we will examine concrete strategies for designing and leading imaginative writing workshops with students. Play is a central theme, one we will regard as a “serious” pedagogical tool and guiding principal, and class meetings will involve frequent low-stakes, in-class writing experiments. One of the goals for this six-week course is that all participants will feel equipped—and excited—to adapt what they’ve learned and apply it in a variety of educational contexts.

Emma Cline

Writing the Extreme

4 classes (1 point) / Sep. 16 - Oct. 7
Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm

Death, sex, drugs, art: how do writers translate the most unimaginable or incommunicable of human experiences onto the page? How do you write a scene where a character recounts their own murder? How does an acid trip look in a story? A birth? A suicide?

Rather than look directly at a solar eclipse, you need special glasses to mediate the intensity. In much the same way, writing about the dramatic and the extreme requires the writer to mediate the experience for the reader and figure out a frame or narrative logic to make such extremes legible.
This class takes the view that nothing is out of bounds for a writer, and that attempting to imagine ourselves into the extreme corners of human experience is part of the storytelling life.

We’ll read excerpts from novels and short stories that take on these topics, and together discuss and formulate a list of different approaches. Authors we’ll be looking at include Bret Easton Ellis, Colson Whitehead, Alissa Nutting, Vladimir Nabokov, Mary Gaitskill, TC Boyle, Greg Jackson, and others.

Cynthia Cruz

The Melancholia of Place

6 classes (1.5 points) / Sept. 23 - Oct. 28  Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm

I finally realized that one of the reasons that I couldn’t finish this novel was that I was ashamed of where I came from and where I had been… When I say I was trying to dig back to the way I myself must have spoken when I was little, I realized that I had acquired so many affectations, had told myself so many lies, that I really had buried myself beneath a whole fantastic image of myself which wasn’t mine.

—James Baldwin

In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud writes that two conditions have many features in common: a “profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance.” These symptoms are the result of the internal, psychic labor of releasing the mourner’s attachment to the lost loved object in the energy-consuming process of grieving; once this mourning is complete, the successful mourner is freed from her binding to the lost object and can make new attachments. For the melancholic, however, these symptoms persist, due to her internal struggle to hold onto that object. The melancholic doesn’t want to let go, or else doesn’t fully know what she has lost or what it had come to represent to her. When a writer loses her place, whether that place be a literal “homeland” or one that is metaphorical (the connection to one’s class, race, or culture), even when as the result of a conscious act of assimilation, she might find herself similarly suffering from melancholic sense of dislocation. In this master class we will look, first, at texts and films that explore examples of melancholy of place. Then, we will turn to works by writers and artists that look back at their homelands or “place,” tethering their work in these literal or internalized landscapes. Writers, artists, and filmmakers we may look at include: Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Frank Stanford, Daniele Pantano, Paul Celan, bell hooks, James Baldwin, Barbara Loden, Marni Ludwig, Martin Ramirez, Christina Sharpe, Yoko Tawada, Alexander Kluge, and Clarice Lispector. Students will keep a scrapbook of their own lost selves/homelands, and this will provide the raw material for their own creative work. Each student will be expected to submit 12-15 pages of poetry and/or prose resulting from their engagement with the work discussed over the course of the term.
Mark Doten

Queer Form

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 3 - Nov. 7 Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm

“The queer world is a space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies.”

— Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public”

“Queerness is not yet here.”

— José Esteban Muñoz, Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity

What do we mean by the words “queer” and “form”—and what kinds of questions do they generate when set next to each other? How do you “queer” form? In this class we will read LGBTQ literature and criticism in order to provide us with strategies for writing outside, or against, normative ideas of literature. We will read and discuss texts by writers such as Maggie Nelson, Qiu Miaojin, Stephanie Burt, Danez Smith, Charlie Jane Anders, Garth Greenwell, Jess Arndt, John Keene, Dennis Cooper, A.M. Homes, José Esteban Muñoz, Judith Butler, and Carmen Maria Machado, texts written in a range of genres and modes, including fiction, memoir, theory and poetry (as well as works that complicate the very notion of genre), which can serve as tools kits or provocations, models or irritations—grist for your own queer writings.

Richard Ford

Reading Mrs. Dalloway

5 classes (1.5 points) / Sept. 16 - Sept. 20 Mon.-Fri., 10am-12pm

Open to 2nd-year Fiction students only. An intense engagement with Virginia Woolf’s masterpiece of the last century. The spine of the course will be this: to question, comment on and evaluate the formal decisions taken by Woolf—as evidenced in the text—in creating this novel (which is to say to read the book as a writer would). We’ll pay special attention to the novel’s narrative mode, its characters, its narrative structure, its beginning and ending movements, its word choices, its revelation of new intelligence, its strains upon the reader, its possible flaws, its rewards—plus, anything else that seems interesting. The presumption of the course is that by becoming a better reader of indisputably great writing, one learns to be a better reader of one’s own writing—which aspires to greatness.

The second concern of the course is to assure that you get your extra-curricular writerly questions addressed by me. A writing life runs along the same rails as one’s day-to-day life. There are, therefore, no inappropriate “writing life” concerns that you might choose to bring up. Feel free.
Students should’ve read *Mrs. Dalloway* entirely and with intelligence, within a week of the course’s commencement. Prompt attendance is absolutely required. Absences result in a grim no-pass.

The text edition we’ll use is the Harcourt-Harvest Book softcover, which is in stock at Book Culture, under the course number.

**Rebecca Godfrey**

**Anti-Heroines**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 4 - Nov. 8  
Fri., 1:30pm-3:30pm

In this class, we’ll look closely at a range of authors who have created female characters who are ruthless, cruel, and violent. We’ll explore how these unruly characters disrupt conventional notions of femininity, as well as the story itself. We’ll discuss the ways complex anti-heroines, whether central or peripheral, can complicate and enrich narrative. The class will focus particularly on characterization, language, and voice in both contemporary and classic works. The anti-heroines discussed will often be wayward or unwanted: “fallen” women, hustlers, recluses, grifters, eccentrics, and terrorists.

Readings will include:

- Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
- Nella Larsen, *Passing*
- Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*
- Elizabeth Smart, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*
- Natsuo Kirino, *Out*
- Philip Roth, *American Pastoral*
- Eileen Myles, *Inferno (A Poet’s Novel)*
- Zadie Smith, *NW*
- Jenny Offill, *Dept. of Speculation*
- Ottessa Moshfegh, *Eileen*

**Peter Godwin**

**First Person Singular**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 22 - Dec. 3  
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm

This course will be a craft-based master class, concentrating on the techniques and skills of life-writing where the writer is present and part of the story. Students will find and work at developing their own voices and points of view. They will also consider the myth of objectivity, issues of fairness, accuracy and moral relativity, cultural appropriation, memoir vs.
autobiography, the savior complex, exoticism, and the rise of accountability.

The course will include several writing exercises and one longer final project. It will draw on short readings from the following authors: Dambudzo Marechera, Lyn Freed, Rian Malan, Jonny Steinberg, Ryszard Kapuściński, W.G. Sebald, Bruce Chatwin, VS Naipaul, Justice Malala, George Orwell, Ahmet Altan, Zawe Ashton, Julian Sayararer, Cathy Renzenbrink, Sisonke Msimang, Thomas Paige McBee, Ahmet Altan, Dina Nayeri (and Peter Godwin).

Susan Hartman

Writing About Communities

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 16 - Nov. 20 Wed., 5:15pm-7:15pm

In this class, students will learn feature writing techniques—how to interview, report on, and structure a story—as they explore a small community outside campus. New York City can be seen as a galaxy of tiny communities: a Bronx salsa bar where veterans hang out; a storefront church in Brownsville; a flamenco troupe on the Upper West Side; a midtown support group for transgender teens. We’ll discuss: How do you gain access to a closely-knit community? How do you establish trust? How do you ask difficult questions? We’ll look at selected readings by journalists and authors, including Dexter Filkins, Rachel Aviv, and Joseph Mitchell. By the last class, students will have completed a feature story.

Richard Howard

The Richard Howard Hours

6 classes (1.5 points) / I. Sept. 10 - Oct. 15 II. Oct. 22 - Dec. 3 Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

This master class will be conducted as two six-week sections that can be enrolled in individually for 1.5 credits. Each section will focus on readings from mid-20th to 21st-century American poets. Poets may include Randall Jarrell, Mona van Duyn, Donald Justice, Adrienne Rich, A. R. Ammons, and Marianne Moore. Each student will, in addition to the readings and class discussions, undertake with Prof. Howard individualized one-on-one tutorials centered on their own poems. The course is limited to six students per section. Students are welcome to sign up for either of the sections, or for both, if there are seats available. Students who participated in previous semesters are welcome to enroll.
Morgan Jerkins

No More Starving Artists: On Navigating Freelancing, Book Deals, and Everything in Between

6 classes (1.5 points) / Sept. 10 - Oct. 8  Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm
(with the sixth session TBD)

Breaking into digital media and publishing is never easy. With many media companies defunct or in danger of collapsing, the freelance bubble is growing larger by the day and there’s less room for error because of the high stakes. In this master class, you will learn from a woman who made her bones through freelancing for some of the biggest publications around—The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Atlantic, Esquire, ELLE, The Washington Post—and channeled that into book deals, a New York Times bestselling debut, and various teaching opportunities. You will learn how to pitch digital editors and literary agents, negotiate compensation, and craft book proposals through classroom assignments, lectures, and guest speakers from the media and publishing worlds.

Alana Massey

Excel at Interviewing with Your Ethics, Your Empathy, and Your Edge Intact

6 classes (1.5 points) / Sept. 23 - Oct. 28  Mon., 6:30pm-8:30pm

In this course, we will discuss many of the well-known fundamental principles, ethics, and best practices related to interviewing for two main purposes: 1) Develop a thorough grasp on how they function across a variety of interview and subject scenarios and 2) Challenge ourselves as storytellers, narrators, creators, and human beings to rise above the most basic principles of interviewing in order to reach a heretofore unreached level of depth and understanding of the subject at hand. Students will be challenged to engage with and discern meaning in silences, pauses, laughter, omissions, eye contact or its absence, and visual and tonal cues (from themselves and their subject) as much as the substantive content of the interviews. The class will grapple with the subtleties between interviews that are inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, and actually dishonest as well as those that end up being flattering, exuberant, intimate, or inappropriate. The class materials will primarily be recorded or written transcripts of interviews and the stories that were produced from them. There will be opportunities in class for students to practice interviewing and being interviewed within a range of realistic scenarios, and the class will then explore the ethical, intellectual, and creative conundrums and opportunities the interviews presented.
Ayanna Mathis

(Mis)Adventures in Time

6 classes (1.5 points) / Sept. 26 - Oct. 31 Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm

“In the novel, there is always a clock.”
—E.M. Forster.

In this master class we’ll grapple with every writer’s dilemma: how to manage time. There are structural considerations aplenty, but fictional time also includes memory (personal and collective), the past, nostalgia, and history. We’ll read essays on these ideas and have a look at how various writers manage these issues in their work. This course will be discussion heavy. Central to its success is our ongoing conversation about your own (mis)adventures in time. Please come with questions and ideas each week.

We will consider work by writers including, but not limited to: Ali Smith, James Baldwin, Mavis Gallant, Julio Cortazar and Helen Oyoyemi.

Leonard Schwartz

Eco-Poetics: The Black of the Page

6 sessions (1.5 points) / Sept. 10 - Sept. 27 Tuc. & Fri., 10am-12pm

It can be argued that we can only write a Nature Poetry worthy of the ecological imperative when we realize we are inside both nature and language, vulnerable to the encounter, able to surrender a certain control… in other words, not outside Nature, positioned so as to write about Nature, but speaking from inside it, as if Nature were the Unconscious. Such writing might not even resemble “nature writing”!

What do literary texts and ecosystems hold in common? They are both complex systems, in which all elements are interrelated. In language, a single word added to or removed from a text can potentially alter the balance of rhythm, image, and meaning. Such is true of an eco-system as well. Languages and eco-systems are both polyvalent hybrids, capable of happening in multiple directions simultaneously. In this light, how do we work on our writing practice so as to maximize the strength and the growth of all those tendrils? What does it mean to write from the black of the page, as opposed to accepting the illusion of the white? Through writing exercises and a series of readings, this class will explore how an eco-poetics might respond to a global dilemma.

Readings will be drawn from Chilean poet Raul Zurita’s Inri, Camille Dungy’s anthology Black Nature: Four Centuries of African-American Nature Poetry, and Charles Baudelaire’s The Flowers of Evil; theoretical works like Brenda Iijima’s The Eco Language Reader, Jed Rasula’s This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry, David Abram’s The Spell of the Sensuous and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s The Visible and the Invisible; and works of fiction such as S. Yizhar’s.
novella Khirbet Khizeh. The class is intended to address the needs and interests of poetry students, fiction students, and creative nonfiction students addressing the conundrum of writing about nature.

Bela Shayevich

**Connecting: Writing and Translation in Performance**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 4 - Nov. 8  
Fri., 1:30pm-3:30pm

Writing isn’t just for reading—it’s for stirring, live connection of the kind that people feel at theaters, comedy shows, poetry slams, and, very occasionally, traditional readings. This master class will facilitate writers’ and translators’ explorations of performance as a way to break through the silence and learn what seemingly quiet texts are truly capable of. After all, performance *is* translation: it transmutes notation into interaction, syntax into stress, punctuation into breath. The ways performers prod texts can give rise to unanticipated questions, revealing answers that transcend traditional interpretation and critique.

This six-week course will apply the ingenious methods of Viola Spolin, Augusto Boal, Cicely Berry, and Uta Hagen to developing translations, exploring how performance expands our understanding of author and text. We will begin our work with Chekhov, and continue on to study the writing and performances of experimentalists such as Cecilia Vicuña, Edwin Torres, and Douglas Kearny, and contemporary slam greats like Ashley August and Danez Smith.

Students will produce and interrogate their own writings and translations, perform their own and one another’s work, and, through this, find novel modes to breathe them to life. While most of the texts and performances we look at will be theatrical and poetic, writers and translators working primarily in prose are encouraged to use this class as a testing ground for their dialogue and narratorial voices. Knowledge of another language is not required; however, for students who do know other languages, translating in this context should be particularly fruitful.

Jesse Sheidlower

**Defining the Dictionary**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 8 - Nov. 19  
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm

While people know that you use the dictionary to find out what words mean, rather few know how dictionaries actually make their decisions. Indeed, the very idea of “the dictionary”—as if there is a single one, which perfectly reflects the reality of language—exemplifies this problem.

In this class, we will explore the history of English dictionaries, from the short glossaries of the early seventeenth century, through Samuel Johnson’s magisterial 1755 work, which
established the idea of literary excellence as the main criterion of language use, to the Oxford English Dictionary’s scholarly and historical approach, to current dictionaries and online language resources, which use computational analyses of billions of words to determine how the language is actually used.

We will also explore how and why the meanings and usages of words change over time, and how dictionaries monitor these changes. Why do some words become obsolete, while others suddenly become popular? How are decisions made about the treatment of “problematic” words, e.g., obscenity or racial terms? Why are some words or meanings regarded as “ungrammatical,” and how does this vary across different styles of writing?

The skills required to analyze the evidence of real language are beneficial for all writers, not just for would-be dictionary editors (a job that is increasingly rare, as the availability of good dictionaries online forces cutbacks or closures at traditional reference publishers). We will engage in various practical exercises for studying the meaning of words—comparing definitions in existing dictionaries, writing our own definitions for new words, using basic computational techniques to inform our suspicions about language use. In the end we will not only have a better idea of how we ourselves understand the language, but also how to make our own intended meanings clear to different audiences.

Azareen Van der Vliet Oloomi

The Illusion of Truth: Writing Auto-Fiction

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 28 - Dec. 9          Mon., 5:15pm-7:15pm

In this course we will examine the strange intimacy between experience and writing as it manifests in several works of auto-fiction. We will ask: How do passion, anxiety, and indignity manifest in language? How do current and past humanitarian crises across the globe impact the production and study of literature? How do writers across cultures invent linguistic structures in order to record and respond to personal and historical crises? In order to inhabit these questions, we will read texts that explore the outer limits of language. What the margins of language offers writers is the necessary distance from which to exert pressure on centralizing forms of speech, to expose subtle forms of censorship, and to record and respond to historical crises. The stories we tell ourselves about who we are—the very grammar of those narratives—shapes our perception of self and world. Manipulating grammar, targeting limiting or exclusionary forms of speech, can lead to a shift in consciousness both for the writer and the reader. That kind of rigor allows literature to have an impact on the social body. We will read authors who navigate the subtle constraints placed on speech in order to bring previously invisible forms of suffering into the realm of public discourse. Readings will include works by authors such as Peter Weiss, Annie Ernaux, Hervé Guibert, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Sonallah Ibrahim, Tayeb Salih, Rachel Cusk, Elaine Scarry, Maggie Nelson, Marguerite Duras, and Renee Gladman.
Adam Wilson

**Writing Funny**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Oct. 24 - Dec. 5       Thu., 6:30pm-8:30pm

In this class we will consider the various forms and functions of humor in written prose, discussing techniques and approaches to humor writing. Students will write their own short pieces, which we will discuss in class, focusing not only on what is or isn’t funny, but on how humor can be advantageously used to increase the power of an overall piece. The class will also break down stories, novels, and essays from a variety of authors in an effort to better understand what makes their humor work. We will investigate strategies related to the craft of humor writing, including self-deprecation, political satire, dark comedy, schtick, humor as a means vs. humor as an end, and how to write funny without sacrificing substance. Readings may include excerpts from work by Donald Barthelme, Percival Everett, Rachel B. Glaser, Jack Handey, Samantha Irby, Mark Leyner, Iris Owens, Mary Robison, Tony Tulathimutte, Joy Williams, and others, as well as short pieces from *McSweeney’s* and *The Onion*.

James Wood

**Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short Stories**

4 classes (1 point) / Oct. 8 - Oct. 29       Tue., 5:15pm-7:15pm

In this class we will examine fictional technique in four short texts by Saul Bellow, Muriel Spark, Penelope Fitzgerald, and Lydia Davis. We shall be examining characterization, realism, style, and form, and reflecting on a century of fictional experiment.

Texts:

Saul Bellow, *Collected Stories*
Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*
Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Blue Flower*
Lydia Davis, *Collected Stories*
SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKSHOP

Jen George  
Wed., 9:30am-12:30pm

Open to 2nd-year students only. This six-point workshop is designed to provide students with the opportunity and instructional support to develop significant text-based works outside the constraints of genre-specific workshops. While existing Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry workshops offer some flexibility in the kinds of work that students are allowed to submit within their genre, the Special Projects Workshop will accommodate new kinds and categories of work by offering an environment with no predetermined generic boundaries or expectations. These projects might include, but are not limited to, verse essays and other cross-genre projects, prose or verse sequences, conceptual projects, works in hybrid forms, procedural and experimental texts, text-based art objects, or any number of other projects that might be best supported, for whatever reason (including special research or production needs), by a balance of vibrant group critique, intensive one-on-one mentorship, and self-guided research and composition.

Unlike most traditional workshops, the Special Projects Workshop will assist students in developing and refining project proposals for their work; these proposals will include a detailed project description that features a rationale, a production schedule, and a bibliography of related reading, viewing, or listening (if applicable). The workshop will ideally bring together students from all three concentrations and facilitate a level of cross-generic conversation—from conception through execution and reception—traditionally not possible within the context of genre-specific workshops.

Students enrolled in a Special Projects Workshop will meet as a group six times throughout the term (four meetings at the start of the term, two at the end) with three or more conferences with the instructor and/or in smaller, focused groups paced out in between. To be considered for the class, students must submit to the department an application no more than three pages in length consisting of the components mentioned above. The application will also be expected to address why the proposed work would be best achieved in the context of a Special Projects Workshop rather than in that of a traditional genre-specific workshop.