



COURSEBOOK

Workshops | Seminars | Lectures | Master Classes

Updated September 1, 2020

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WORKSHOPS

FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Rivka Galchen
Mon., 2:10pm-5:10pm
Victor LaValle
Tue., 10am-1pm
Sam Lipsyte
Tue., 10am-1pm
Heidi Julavits
Tue., 2pm-5pm
Ben Marcus
Tue., 2pm-5pm
James Cañón
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Diksha Basu
Thu., 10am-1pm
Nicholas Christopher
Thu., 2pm-5pm
Joshua Furst
Thu., 2pm-5pm
Anelise Chen
Fri., 10am-1pm

NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Brenda Wineapple
Mon., 2:10pm-5:10pm
Richard Locke
Tue., 2pm-5pm
Michael Greenberg
Wed., 2pm-5pm
Michelle Orange
Fri., 10am-1pm

NONFICTION – THESIS (9 points)

Second-Years only

Phillip Lopate
Mon., 2:10pm-5:10pm
Lis Harris
Tue., 2pm-5pm
Wendy S. Walters
Tue., 2pm-5pm
Leslie Jamison
Thu., 2pm-5pm

POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

Lynn Xu
Mon., 10am-1pm
Cynthia Cruz
Mon., 1pm-4pm
Mark Bibbins
Fri., 2pm-5pm
Timothy Donnelly
Fri., 2pm-5pm
Emily Skillings
Fri., 2pm-5pm

SEMINARS

—MONDAY—

Monica Ferrell (CG)
Word and Image: Reading and Writing
Contemporary Poetry for Prose Writers
Mon., 10am-12pm

Lincoln Michel (FI)
Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing
Speculative Fiction
Mon., 10am-12pm

Rivka Galchen (CG)
Comedy and Calamity
Mon., 10am-12pm

Gideon Lewis-Kraus (NF)
Reporting Non-News
Mon., 12:05pm-2:05pm

Kate Zambreno (NF)
On Time
Mon., 2:10pm-4:10pm

Ben Marcus (FI)
Technologies of Heartbreak
Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Erroll McDonald (FI)
William Faulkner and World Fiction
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

—TUESDAY—

Phillip Lopate
Studies in the Essay
Tue., 10am-12pm

Lynn Steger Strong (FI)
Unhinged Narrators
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm

Keri Bertino (CG)
The Writer as Teacher
Tue., 2pm-5pm

Matvei Yankelevich (CG, TR)
Experiments in Translation:
(Re-)Writing Literature
Tue., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Alan Gilbert (PO)
Formalism, Confessionalism, Identity:
Postwar American Poetry
Tue., 6pm-8pm

Seminars and translation workshops are 3 points.

(FI) = Fiction (NF) = Nonfiction (PO) = Poetry
(CG) = Cross-Genre (TR) = Translation

SEMINARS (cont.)

—WEDNESDAY—

Brigid Hughes (CG)

Editing and the Writer
Wed., 10am-12pm

Leslie Jamison (NF)

Illness, Intimacy, Injury, and Pleasure:
Writing the Body
Wed., 10am-12pm

Leanne Shapton (FI)

Words and Pictures
Wed., 10am-12pm

Lara Vapnyar (FI)

Building a Scene
Wed., 10am-12pm

Deborah Paredez (PO)

Witness, Record, Document:
Poetry and Testimony
Wed., 10:10am-12:00pm

Margo Jefferson (NF)

Art, Culture and Criticism
Wed., 2pm-4pm

Wendy S. Walters (NF)

The Brilliant Voice
Wed., 2pm-4pm

Binnie Kirshenbaum (FI)

More Excruciating
Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm

—THURSDAY—

Nicholas Christopher (CG)

Travellers' Tales:
Novelists & Poets on the Road
Thu., 10am-12pm

Natasha Wimmer (CG, TR)

Literary Translation Workshop
Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Timothy Donnelly (1st-year PO only)

Prosody
Thu., 1pm-4pm

BK Fischer (CG)

The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax,
and Praxis
Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Rebecca Godfrey (FI)

Anti-Heroines
Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm

Mark Doten (FI)

Queer Form
Thu., 6pm-8pm

Dorothea Lasky (PO)

Writing from the Invisible Flower:
An Exploration into an Occult Poetics
Thu., 6pm-8pm

—FRIDAY—

Katrine Jensen (CG, TR)

Literary Translation Workshop
Fri., 10am-12:30pm

LECTURES

—TUESDAY—

Alice Quinn

A Cornucopia of American and
International Poetry, 1975-2020 (3 points)

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

—WEDNESDAY—

Lee Siegel

The Big Blur: Writing in the Space
Between Art and Life (3 points)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

—THURSDAY—

Richard Locke

Twentieth-Century
Literary Nonfiction (3 points)

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

MASTER CLASSES

—MONDAY—

Camille Rankine

A World of Words (1.5 points)
Mon., 6pm-8pm
Nov. 9 - Dec. 14

Susan Hartman

Writing About Communities (1.5 points)
Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9

—TUESDAY—

Tan Lin

Rules and the Poem (1.5 points)
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
Oct. 27 - Dec. 8

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

The Art of the Short Story: From Opening Line
to Publication (1.5 points)
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
Sept. 15 - Oct. 20

James Wood

Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short
Stories (1 point)
Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
Nov. 10 - Dec. 1

—WEDNESDAY—

Nalini Jones

Writing Back to the Canon: A Touch of Genius
(1.5 points)
Wed., 10am-12pm
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9

Sarah Arvio

Decreating and Recreating English (1.5 points)
Wed., 2pm-4pm
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9

Hannah Lillith Assadi

The Ghost Story (1.5 points)
Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm
Oct. 28 - Dec. 9

—THURSDAY—

Heather Radke

Small Potatoes: Writing Nonfiction About the
Everyday (1.5 points)
Thu., 10am-12pm
Oct. 29 - Dec. 10

Leonard Schwartz

Literary Art and the Language of Philosophy
(1.5 points)
Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm
Sept. 10 - Oct. 15

Nicole Kear

Writing the "Unruly Body" (1.5 points)
Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm
Oct. 29 - Dec. 10

—FRIDAY—

Corinna Barsan

Revise Like an Editor (1.5 points)
Fri., 2pm-4:20pm
Sept. 18 - Oct. 23

—OTHER—

Richard Ford

Reading "To the Lighthouse" (1.5 points)
Oct. 15, Thu, 1:10-3:10
Oct. 16, Fri, 1:10-3:10
Oct. 21, Wed, 12pm-2pm
Oct. 22, Thu, 1:10-3:10
Oct. 23, Fri, 1:10-3:10

SEMINARS

Keri Bertino

The Writer as Teacher

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tue., 2pm-5pm

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

Travellers’ Tales: Novelists & Poets on the Road

(CROSS-GENRE)

Thu., 10am-12pm

Travel writings by novelists and poets reflect how their worldly journeys fed into and often mirrored their artistic lives. We will examine how the geography of the imagination meshes vitally with the geography of the world at large, discussing the respective writers’ fiction and/or poetry in conjunction with their travel books. The reading list is international and thematically varied, as is the approach each writer took to “travel.” We will explore what exactly that meant to them, and which of many narrative approaches they chose: memoir, diary, travelogue, adventure story, spiritual quest, personal journey, cultural/historical essay, or some combination thereof. The styles are eclectic, as exemplified by the two writers who alternated between prose and poetry in a single text.

Each week there will be a short student presentation. A single paper will be required at the end of the term: a formal proposal (including a brief sample chapter or introduction) for a travel book—informed by all the varieties we have explored—the student might want to write.

Readings include: *In Patagonia*, Bruce Chatwin; *Tell My Horse*, Zora Neale Hurston; *Running in the Family*, Michael Ondaatje; *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (selections), Rebecca West; *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Bashô; *The Voices of Marrakesh*, Elias Canetti; *The Coldest Winter*, Paula Fox; *My Journey to Lhasa*, Alexandra David-Neel; *An African in Greenland*, Tété-Michel Kpomassie; *The Colossus of Maroussi*, Henry Miller; *Etruscan Places*, D.H. Lawrence; *Journey to the Land of the Flies*, Aldo Buzzzi; *American Diary*, Italo Calvino; *The Snow Leopard*, Peter Matthiessen

Timothy Donnelly

Prosody

(POETRY)

Thu., 1pm-4pm

Two-thirds seminar, one-third craft class, this course is designed primarily as a “landing seminar” for all first year poets, who are expected to enroll in it. It will 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 Sappho’s “Hymn to Aphrodite” to Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, from Modernist free verse to contemporary traditional and innovative work; from the prose poems of Francis Ponge to lyrics by A Tribe Called Quest. Considerable emphasis will be placed on the ballad, iambic pentameter (the closed heroic couplet and blank verse, especially) 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*, as well as Elaine Scarry’s *Dreaming by the Book*. We will also examine a handful of key defenses of poetry, including Sidney’s “An Apology for Poetry,” Wordsworth’s “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*,” Peacock’s “The Four Ages of Poetry,” Shelley’s “A Defence of Poetry,” and certain 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 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, Gwendolyn Brooks, Joshua Clover, Wanda Coleman, Olena Kalaytiak 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 Volkman, John Yau, Monica Youn, Kevin Young, and many others.

Mark Doten

Queer Form

(FICTION)

Thu., 6pm-8pm

“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.

Monica Ferrell

Word and Image: Reading and Writing Contemporary

Poetry for Prose Writers

(CROSS-GENRE)

Mon., 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, Marilynne 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.

Rivka Galchen

Comedy and Calamity

(CROSS-GENRE)

Mon., 10am-12pm

Eugene Ionesco said, “I never understood the difference between the comic and the tragic... when I thought I’d written a comedy, people cried, and when I thought I’d written a tragedy, people laughed.” This course will investigate the relationship between laughter and lament, between the madcap and the mournful. How is it that Muriel Spark’s *The Girls of Slender Means* reads at once as a caper and a concatenation of brutalities? In what ways are *The Good Soldier Švejk* by Jaroslav Hasek and *Catch-22* by Joseph Heller among the most honest novels about war?

What connects a comic “turn” and the turn we catch sight of in the etymology of “adversity” (from *adversus* “turned against”)? Why does Kafka make us laugh? Why has that laughter so often been overlooked?

In considering novels, essays, poems, stories, and plays that embody the special relationship of the comic to the catastrophic, we will examine the various ways in which comedy functions as

a strategy for survival, and we will also think about when and why a comic view might be excluded.

Alan Gilbert

Formalism, Confessionalism, Identity: Postwar American Poetry

(POETRY)

Tue., 6pm-8pm

This seminar is designed to analyze the ways in which examples of formalism, confessionalism, and identity might occur in our writing. We will begin with T. S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and end with the anthology *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*, edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal. Along the way we will read poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks and Charles Olson, Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath and Allen Ginsberg, Robert Hayden and Lucille Clifton, Frank O'Hara and John Berryman, Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde, and more. However different as writers and individuals, all of these poets shared a common dissatisfaction with the condition of poetry and the role of the poet in the United States as it moved from the relatively calm early 1950s to the turbulent later 1960s.

Rebecca Godfrey

Anti-Heroines

(FICTION)

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

In this seminar, we will explore the depiction of anti-heroines in works by a range of authors in order to closely examine how these unruly characters disrupt conventional notions of femininity, as well as the story itself. This course will explore the various ways anti-heroines, whether central or peripheral, complicate and enrich novels and the short story. The course 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, recluses, seducers, imposters, grifters, eccentrics, and terrorists.

Readings will include:

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
Jean Rhys, *Voyage in the Dark*
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*
Ottessa Moshfegh, *Eileen*
Jenny Offill, *Dept. of Speculation*

Brigid Hughes

Editing and the Writer

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wed., 10am-12pm

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

Illness, Intimacy, Injury, and Pleasure: Writing the Body

(NONFICTION)

Wed, 10am-12pm

This class will look at how writing documents and manifests the electric relationship between bodily experience and consciousness. How are sensation and emotion connected? How is this connection made uneasy? Ruptured? Turned glorious? How is “the self” contoured—literally and otherwise—by its physical vessel? How can these lofty questions help us think about “trivial” genres in new ways? (Think: food writing, sports writing, sex writing, misery porn.) How and when does the body carry political implications? Does it ever not? How can we think about these questions about bodily experience as questions of craft: How do we shape the physical worlds of our writing, and the bodily lives of our written citizens? We’ll use four major nodes of experience—illness, injury, intimacy, and ecstasy—to think about ways in which the body rises into prominence or becomes undeniable in moments of pain and pleasure. The course will include a consideration of public diaries and journals that have emerged from the Corona-19 pandemic, as a case-study in documenting a collective bodily experience both shared and variegated. Other readings may include writing from Virginia Woolf, Teju Cole, Eula Biss, Susan Sontag, Anuk Arudpragasam, Terese Marie Mailhot, Andre Dubus, Sarah Manguso, MFK Fisher, David Foster Wallace, Kristin Dombek, Claudia Rankine, Kiki Petrosino, Roger Reeves, and Frank Bidart.

Margo Jefferson

Art, Culture, and Criticism

(NONFICTION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Criticism joins the subjective, the objective, and the speculative. Criticism is analytic and ekphrastic. Critics take a work of art, a controversy, a movement, a fad, to locate its history, explore its place on the contemporary landscape and consider its future. Critics engage in cultural conversations that spur readers to take risks and ask questions. A single piece of criticism can report, describe, argue, query and interpret. And, since examining art and culture mean examining oneself, critics probe their own assumptions, biases, passions, principles and ambivalences. What is art? What is taste? How do our personal histories and our politics mark our aesthetics and our choice of language?

We will read reviews and essays across a wide range of forms and genres. Implicitly and explicitly, they address cultural legacies and hierarchies; aesthetic debates; negotiations between established tradition(s) and emerging ones. And not least, the varieties and pleasures of critical prose.

Binnie Kirshenbaum

More Excruciating

(FICTION)

Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm

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

We will examine how pain, in all its guises, is expressed on the page. As readers, can we *really* know, and as writers, how can we convey someone else’s anguish? 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 what of pain that has no tangible locus? When the answer to the question, ‘Where does it hurt?’ is, ‘Nowhere and everywhere,’ how do we communicate the excruciating pains of despair, failure, loneliness, grief, humiliation, shame, guilt, madness, heartlessness, regret, fear, and rage?

To know and to convey 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 is like to *be* them, even if we find them reprehensible. The works we will read have been selected solely for variety of excruciation, for the different experiences of bleeding without evidence of blood. We will be reading short novels, short stories, essays, and some poetry by a wide range of authors including Thomas Mann, Elizabeth Strout, Alice Munro, Richard Wright, Ian McEwan, and Ayana Mathis, among others.

This seminar has a workshop component and will be limited to twelve students. “More Excruciating” builds on a previous seminar: “The Excruciating,” however the first seminar is not a prerequisite and the course is open to students who have taken the previous seminar.

Dorothea Lasky

Writing from the Invisible Flower: An Exploration

Into an Occult Poetics

(POETRY)

Thu., 6pm-8pm

In this class, we will explore work that engages with the occult. We will use this exploration as a foundation into our own delvings into the great green mystery of life and poetry. We will look at written work by canonical poets and writers such as H.D., Hannah Weiner, Sun Ra, W.B. Yeats, Wanda Coleman, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Laura Riding Jackson, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Shirley Jackson, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, contemporary poets like Nathaniel Mackey, Cecilia Vicuña, Brandon Shimoda, Will Alexander, Etel Adnan, and Bhanu Kapil, occult practitioners like Helena Blavatsky, Éliphas Lévi, and Aleister Crowley, as well as art and film by Hilma af Klint, Ana Mendieta, Pamela Colman Smith, Maya Deren, David Lynch, Jennifer Kent, Dario Argento, and Matt Mullican, among others, and consider the ways in which these writers and artists use the unseen world as both creative source and force. We will discuss this writing and art on its own traditional aesthetic merit, but also we will deeply consider its spiritual resonances that cannot be defined neatly into a rational or linear understanding of the universe. In doing so, we will resist the idea that writing must fit into predetermined emotional, imagistic, or narrative trajectories and begin to expand our own work into the realm of the holy imagination (a cognitive space that could be conceived as a sort of afterworld or alternative universe). The possibilities for broadening and deepening our own writing through this exploration are immense, as once we open up our imaginations to our own invisibilities, we will find an infinite wealth of creative potential. Work will include: weekly readings and responses, experiential writing exercises, a 6-7 page critical piece, and a 18-20 page final creative manuscript.

Gideon Lewis-Kraus

Reporting Non-News

(NONFICTION)

Mon., 12:05pm-2:05pm

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., 10am-12pm

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.

Ben Marcus

Technologies of Heartbreak

(FICTION)

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

This seminar will examine how emotion is attempted and transmitted in fiction, the various ways readers are captured and made to care about a story. Emotional effects—rapture, sympathy, desire, empathy, fascination, grief, repulsion—will be considered as techniques of language, enabled or muted by narrative context, perspective, the management of time, and a multitude of stylistic approaches to language. How can a sentence, a phrase, a paragraph cause us to feel things, and is a high degree of feeling akin to “liking” a book? What is it to care about a character or the progress of a story, and how was that care installed in us? What are the various kinds and sequences of sentences that, when placed in a narrative, can produce emotional engagement in a reader, or is it impossible to isolate our reaction to a book in terms of its language? The focus will be on some rhetorical strategies short story writers have used to impart feeling, among them: concealment, indirection, revelation, confession, flat affect, irony, hyperbole, repetition, sentimentality,

elusiveness, and sincerity. We will look closely at a variety of techniques: point of view, the management of time, portraiture, description, and tone and language in general. Over the course of the semester we will primarily read contemporary short stories, looking to decipher how our emotions are entreated and surrendered. In so doing, we might move closer to deepening the emotional impact of our own work.

Erroll McDonald

William Faulkner and World Fiction

(FICTION)

Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

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.

Lincoln Michel

Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing Speculative Fiction

(FICTION)

Mon., 10am-12pm

How do we build the impossible? What scaffolding supports the surreal? This seminar will examine the forms, effects, and structures of speculative fiction. We’ll look at the shapes of fairy tales with Angela Carter and Donald Barthelme. We’ll study how SF worlds are built (and destroyed) with Octavia Butler, Italo Calvino, and Ursula K. Le Guin. We’ll examine the psychological effects of terror and the uncanny with Sigmund Freud, Franz Kafka, and Shirley Jackson. After investigating

the forms of the fantastic and the futuristic, we'll use our blueprints to create our own works in class.

Tentative reading list includes:

The Bloody Chamber by Angela Carter
Wild Seed by Octavia Butler
Invisible Cities by Italo Calvino
The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin
Revenge by Yoko Ogawa
The Woman in the Dunes by Kobo Abe
The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury
Fever Dream by Samanta Schweblin

We'll also look at essays or short fiction from Kelly Link, Tzvetan Todorov, Kate Bernheimer, Brian Evenson, Ann Radcliffe, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Samuel Delany, Dino Buzzati, and others.

Deborah Paredez

Witness, Record, Document: Poetry and Testimony

(POETRY)

Wed., 10:10am-12:00pm

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.*

Leanne Shapton

Words and Pictures

(FICTION)

Wed., 10am-12pm

People learn how to read pictures before they learn how to read words. Since the invention of photography, our image literacy has continued to evolve. The advent of smartphones and our instantaneous ability to communicate publicly and privately with photos and videos has made visual storytelling both more widespread and more sophisticated.

This seminar will focus on experiments in non-verbal communication. We will discuss and utilize, through creative assignments, the language of image-based media. The class will look at catalogs, yearbooks, magazines, fliers, photo books, graphic novels, social media, and film. Some questions we'll address include: How do Google image and Instagram influence how we read and understand a story? What can (or can't) a caption tell us about an image?

Each seminar will be dedicated in part to live experimentation; students will come to class with materials to create a new image-based form, combining texts and images, but sometimes relying solely on visual elements. Students will conduct these weekly experiments overseen by the instructor, after which the results will be presented and discussed.

Required Texts:

All the Clothes of a Woman, Hans Peter Feldmann

Here, Richard McGuire

Sabrina, Nick Drnaso

Time Outs, Nancy Holt

End of an Age, Paul Graham

The Mushroom Collector, Jason Fulford

Joy, Zadie Smith

A Living Man Declared Dead, Taryn Simon

RFK Funeral Train, Robert Fusco

Blind Spot, Teju Cole

Lynn Steger Strong

Unhinged Narrators

(FICTION)

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

In the Lydia Davis short story "Fear" an unnamed woman runs out of her house every night, "overcoat flapping wildly" and screams "Emergency! Emergency!" until someone from the neighborhood comes to lead her inside. The end of the story reads thusly, "We know she is making it up; nothing has really happened to her. But we understand, because there is hardly one of us who has not been moved at some time to do just what she has done, and every time, it has taken all our

strength, and even the strength of our friends and families too, to quiet us.” In this class, we will look at books with narrators who run wildly out of their houses in their nightclothes, who scream and yell and break things, obsessives, those who have been institutionalized or committed heinous acts. We will examine the particular privilege of literature to be able to not pathologize, but, perhaps, instead, to explore the ways that those that might at first seem to suffer from pathologies might also teach us about the pathologies of the wider world. We will look at the particular craft of portraying narrators that might feel alienating or off-putting, narrators who, were we perhaps to meet them on the street, might make us want to run away. We will explore and discuss the tools through which these same narrators, in the particular space of fiction, might instead become accessible and engaging to us, and might in fact teach us about ourselves.

Readings will include:

Elena Ferrante, *Days of Abandonment*
Alissa Nutting, *Tampa*
Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*
Paul Beatty, *The Sellout*
Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*
Rachel Ingalls, *Mrs. Caliban*
Kobo Abe, *The Face of Another*

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, and dialogue. We will study how to write sex scenes, death scenes, party scenes, battle scenes, and nature scenes. The readings will include Tolstoy, Ferrante, Bolano, Proulx, Munro, Waters, and Wallace.

Wendy S. Walters

The Brilliant Voice

(NONFICTION)

Wed., 2pm-4pm

A writer’s voice is their signature. It helps define their body of work while modulating to accommodate a variety of formal ambitions. While the writer’s voice is not fixed, its evolution over time can help to affirm the relationship between diverse critical and creative investments. Through reading and writing exercises, we will attempt to decipher the way that voice represents (or fails to represent) an identity or persona. We will also consider the way a writer’s voice makes visible a

unique world of possible intersections. Over the course of the semester, students will practice techniques to help to develop their comfort and trust in their own voice. Readings will engage works from a variety of genres including creative nonfiction, fiction, history and poetry and may include writing by John McPhee, Emily Bernard, Jorge Luis Boreas, John Milton, Margo Jefferson, Alexander Chee, Lydia Davis, William Hazlitt, Natalie Diaz, and Maria Tumarkin.

Matvei Yankelevich

Experiments in Translation: (Re-)Writing Literature

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

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

To begin with, all translations are not what they seem—they may be right even when they’re wrong—and what we call “a translation” is never the same thing twice. This course will explore the generative “mis-translation,” scandalous paraphrase, treacherous imitations and other (purposeful or inevitable) mis-deeds of the pen in its confrontation with the great text of literature “that writes us.” Since linguists and translators admit (and sometimes celebrate) the impossibility of equivalency between language, all our word-for-word hopes and dreams as well as the sacred inviolability of the original that pervade modern prejudices in the publication and reception of translations will be hung out to dry for the duration of our experimental semester. We’ll poke holes in theories that circumscribe translation and seek inspiration in interpretive and creative approaches to canonic texts, in translations that push at the limits of what is generally considered “translation proper” and probe the instability of “original” textual sources and authorship. We will consider how the creative work of translation opens up new reserves of language for us to mine; how it loosens our grip on our own “voice” and lets in others; and conversely, how our own language affects our encounter with a foreign or faraway voice. We’ll look for ways to open up our own writing in and through translation by recuperating volition and agency in the encounter with the authority of “original texts” and by uncovering inherited biases and hidden prejudices permeating our attitude toward the foreign, the untranslatable, and the universal.

Reading for the course may include some of the following: Jack Spicer’s “versions” of Lorca; David Cameron’s and Brandon Brown’s “bad” translations of Baudelaire; Sawako Nakayasu’s “collaboration” with Chika Sagawa; palimpsest and erasure in Jen Bervin’s encounter with Shakespeare; appropriative transformations by Layli Long Soldier and M. Nourbese Philip; Christian Hawkey’s seances with Trakl; Ezra Pound’s Chinese stylizations; Jonathan Stalling’s “Yinglishi”; Raymond Queneau’s experiments in paraphrase; English-to-English translations such as Paul Legault’s Emily Dickinson; homophonic translations from the Zukofsky Catullus to Melnick’s Iliad; Anna Moschovakis’s translation-as-response. We’ll also read and talk about several newly published translational experiments. Through these readings, we’ll acquaint ourselves with several procedural strategies (homophonic, Oulipian, computer-generated, etc.), perform some translation exercises along similar lines, and invent our own.

In order to examine the ways that translators are called upon to make crucial aesthetic and political choices, we will read excerpts of “straight” translations that approach complex issues of dialect, neologism, historical context, and invented language. (Possible texts include Erin Moure’s translation of Wilson Bueno’s novel *Paraguayan Sea*, and Emily Wilson’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*.)

Because translation is at once a process, a procedure, and a metaphor, we'll consider a handful of writers' meditations on translation (Joyelle McSweeney, Johannes Göransson, Rosmarie Waldrop) and a few important theoretical essays (Benjamin, de Campos, Glissant, Schleiermacher).

Knowledge of a foreign language is not required.

Kate Zambreno

On Time

(NONFICTION)

Mon., 2:10pm-4:10pm

In this seminar we will think about time as one of the central meditations of the writer. In the texts we read and write, we will be considering the day and the daily, as well as the time that elapses within works, and the time that it takes for the writer to write the work, and how these concepts interconnect with each other. Some works we will read include autofiction, I-novels, weather journals, mourning diaries, and books written while dying, texts potentially by Claudia Rankine, Hervé Guibert, Sheila Heti, David Wojnarowicz, Yuko Tsushima, Renee Gladman, Ben Lerner, Roland Barthes, T. Fleischmann, Derek Jarman, and Lydia Davis. We will also be thinking back to 70s conceptual experiments that draw upon the durational, from Bernadette Mayer's Memory to the date paintings of On Kawara and the early films of Chantal Akerman. Writers will keep a regular diary or journal as a space of process and duration, and will also be responsible for bringing one object of time (capsule?) to the seminar for presentation.

LITERARY TRANSLATION WORKSHOPS

Natasha Wimmer

Thu., 10am-12:30pm

Katrine Øgaard Jensen

Fri., 10am-12:30pm

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.

LECTURES

Richard Locke

Twentieth-Century Literary Nonfiction

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

A survey of criticism, reportage, polemics, memoirs, and meditations since the 1920's that explores the variety and flexibility of nonfiction styles and genres. These writers changed the form of literary nonfiction in ways that still matter. They constitute a loose tradition that's still evolving. This is not a canon but a selection of useful writers.

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 and International Poetry, 1975-2020

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

I've been in the field of poetry for forty five years, from 1975 up to now, from the editorial and publishing side at Knopf and *The New Yorker* and from the vantage point of a nonprofit organization devoted to the art, the Poetry Society of America, where I served as executive director for eighteen years. And I've been here at Columbia exploring the work of poets and fiction writers with contemporary writers I admire since 1990. Many of our Columbia graduates in this time have gone on to hugely distinguished careers of their own. In this class, I'd like to revisit the work of poets whom I've known over decades, including Jane Kenyon, Lucille Clifton, Franz Wright, Galway Kinnell, Seamus Heaney, Deborah Digges, Jack Gilbert, C.D. Wright, Charles Simic, and Lucie Brock-Broido, who directed the poetry concentration here at Columbia with such devotion and whose debut volume was chosen in my time at Knopf. (She went on to publish three more brilliant

collections with the firm, working with Harry Ford and then the marvelous editor Deborah Garrison who will join our class this fall.) My era also featured the work of great international poets not writing in English—many of them Polish, including Zbigniew Herbert, Czeslaw Milosz, and Wislawa Szymborska, all of whom published poetry I ardently appreciated. With us to explore all this great work will be contemporaries supremely affected by it who will also prepare packets of work by poets they especially admire, in addition to select poems of their own for us all to discuss.

Our guests include:

Rick Barot, who was born in the Philippines and grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. A Stegner Fellow in Poetry, he is the author of *The Darker Fall* (2002), *Want* (2008), a finalist for the Lambda Literary Awards, *Chord* (2015), and *The Galleons* (2020). He is a Guggenheim Fellow and the recipient of the Poetry Society of America's Shelley Memorial Award in 2020.

Ada Limón is the author of four collections, including *Lucky Wreck* (2006), *This Big Fake World* (2006), *Sharks in the Rivers* (2010), and *Bright Dead Things* (2015), a finalist for both the National Book Award and the National Book Critics' Circle Award. Her poems appear widely in journals and magazines—among them *Harvard Review* and *The New Yorker*.

Matthew Zapruder is a poet, a translator, and an editor at Wave Books. His four collections include *Come On All You Ghosts* (2010), a New York Times Notable Book of the Year, and *Sun Bear* (2014), both from Copper Canyon Press, as well as *Why Poetry*, a book of prose (Ecco Press). His second collection, *The Pajamaist*, was chosen by Library Journal as one of the top ten poetry collections of 2006 and was awarded the William Carlos Williams Prize from the Poetry Society of America.

Rachel Eliza Griffiths is a poet, photographer, and novelist. Her five collections of poems include *Seeing the Body* (W.W.Norton, 2020) and the award-winning *Mule and Pear* (2011). Her honors include fellowships from Cave Canem and the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, and her debut novel is forthcoming from Random House in 2021.

Dana Levin is the author of *In the Surgical Theater* (1999), which won the Witter Bynner Prize from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the PEN/Osterweil Award. Louise Gluck also chose the collection for the APR/ Honickman Prize, calling it “sensuous, compassionate, violent, extravagant.” Levin's other books include *Wedding Day* (2005), *Key Burial* (2011), and *Banana Palace* (2016).

Deborah Garrison is the author of *A Working Girl Can't Win: And Other Poems* (1999) and *The Second Child: Poems* (2008). She was an editor at *The New Yorker* for many years and is currently poetry editor at Alfred A. Knopf and a senior editor at Pantheon Books. Her distinguished list of poets at Knopf includes Lucie Brock-Broido, Franz Wright, D.Nurkse, Robin Coste Lewis, Patrick Phillips, Kevin Young, and Cynthia Zarin.

Tomás Q. Morin is the author of the collections *Patient Zero* and *A Larger Country*, winner of the APR/Honickman Prize. He is co-editor with Mary L'Esperance of the anthology *Coming Close: Forty Essays on Philip Levine* and translator of *The Heights of Macchu Picchu* by Pablo Neruda.

Students will be provided with packets of material in PDF form ahead of each class.

Two books will be required reading: *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*, edited by Eavan Boland and Mark Strand, and *Why Poetry* by Matthew Zapruder (Ecco Press).

Student writers will be asked to write two two-page papers. Finally, I'd be delighted if each of you memorize sixty lines of poetry: one or two longer poems or several shorter ones. We can have a class devoted to these at the close of the term, and each of you can say what the experience of memorizing the poem/poems was like. We'll be on Zoom, and you can keep the work nearby in case you need to consult it. It should be fun for us all and NOT a contest.

Lee Siegel

The Big Blur: Writing in the Space Between Art and Life

Wed., 2pm-4pm

Acknowledging the artifice of both art and life has been a rich vein in fiction. But now some of our most original writers are exploring not just the boundaries of fiction and reality—that goes back to Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveau roman* and, further, to *Tristram Shandy*—but the evolution of social life itself into some kind of hybrid animal of fact, art-making, fantasy, lies and self-deceit.

This is hardly brand new. Movies like *Synecdoche, Being John Malkovich*, and *Birdman* have been exploring this terrain for years. And far beyond the screen and the page, openly fraudulent performances of authenticity are either being embraced as the real thing, or welcomed as assaults on realities that many people find intolerable. Behold our political life.

On the page, fiction blurring fiction and nonfiction has a long history, and in this course we will take a look at the antecedents of what you might call today's neo-realist-postmodernists. We might touch on the *roman à clef*, that mixing of art and real life that now seems almost quaint, and then a memoir or two that is consciously a composite of what really happened and what didn't happen, and then a couple of novels that are frankly works of autobiography. After that, things get more complicated.

Authors and works might include Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (fiction disguised as memoir), followed by Richard Wright's *Black Boy* (memoir written like fiction) followed by Elizabeth Hardwick's *Sleepless Nights* (memoir disguised as fiction). We might take up Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the great granddaddy of so many. Then it's on to Frederick Exley's *A Fan's Notes*, Philip Roth's *The Counterlife*, Dave Eggers' *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, the trying yet delicious Knusgaard, and the delicious yet sometimes trying riddle of Elena Ferrante (the more anonymous she remains, the more her fiction seems a revelation of her identity). We will conclude with three contemporary masters of The Big Blur: Sheila Heti, Rachel Cusk, and Ben Lerner. In their work, shifting boundaries of the real and the not, un-, sur- or unreal are no longer the stuff of a meditation on the nature of literary art. These writers are portraying the way we live now.

One five-to-ten page paper is required. The paper may be a critical response to works we have read, or it could be an example of 'The Big Blur' itself—either an excerpt from a future, or imaginary, novel, or a self-contained piece of creative writing in the style of a novel that purposefully plays with levels of fact and fiction, art, and actuality.

Readings include: Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*; Richard Wright, *Black Boy*; Elizabeth Hardwick, *Sleepless Nights*; Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*; Frederick Exley, *A Fan's Notes*; Philip Roth, *The Counterlife*; Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*; Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle: Book I*; Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend*; Sheila Heti, *How Should a Person Be?*; Rachel Cusk, *Outline*; Ben Lerner, *Leaving the Atocha Station*.

MASTER CLASSES

Sarah Arvio

Decreating and Recreating English

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Wed., 2pm-4pm
(Oct. 28 - Dec. 9)

In this master class, we will delve into the historical deep structure of the English language, examining the ways in which the language handles different types of thought, with emphasis on poetic and “diplomatic” usages. Our point of departure will be the merger of Anglo-Saxon and French (then the languages of conquered and conqueror) that ensued from the Norman Conquest of England in 1066, an event that produced a dramatic decreation, de-englishing and frenching of English. How do words from those languages carry sound and sense in different ways? What qualities of English are the backbone of the poetic language (and thus also of creative prose)—and how did the poetic line evolve under the influence of Norman French? Above all, how can these intuitions inform our own use of English, as well as our translations into English from other languages spoken and written in all parts of the world? In light of these questions, we will try out some writing exercises and explore strategies for translating both formal and free verse into English that reflect the sound patterns and properties of the original text. No proficiency in any language other than English required.

Hannah Lillith Assadi

The Ghost Story

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm
(Oct. 28 - Dec. 9)

Fiction is a sanctuary for the otherwise near extinct belief in the spectral—ghosts, haunted houses, and visions of the afterlife resiliently abound. Though writing the dead and of death run directly against the age-old adage, “write what you know”, some of the most memorable characters, scenes, and settings in literature are apparitional. Moreover, the ghost and the ghostly often serve as literary devices for conjuring the haunted historical past. In this six-week master class, students will write a ghost story (either a chapter of a longer piece or a complete short story). There will be weekly exercises assigned toward this goal, focused on the construction of the spectral character, a haunted sense of space and time, and the supernatural in plot. Additionally, we will be reading from Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Paramo*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*, Stanislaw Lem’s *Solaris*, George Saunders’ *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, Silko’s *Ceremony*, and others for inspiration.

Corinna Barsan

Revise Like an Editor

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Fri., 2pm-4:20pm
(Sept. 18 - Oct. 23)

The revision process is one of the most challenging aspects of writing and one of the most important in the evolution of your work. In this six-week intensive master class, we will take an editor's perspective on polishing your writing. The class is structured as a mini-workshop and we will devote our time to peer reading and critique with an emphasis on elements of developmental editing as well as line editing. We will look at the big picture as well as the finer details. Sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, we will sharpen your tools for revision by focusing on refinement of style, building structure and flow, establishing characters, and aligning with intention. Over the course of the class, each writer will submit a short piece or pages from a larger work. Close editorial feedback will be shared to help shape and strengthen the material. Additional light reading will be assigned for class discussion, but mostly we will concentrate on student work.

Richard Ford

Reading *To the Lighthouse*

5 sessions, 1.5 points

The five sessions are on:
Oct. 15, Thu, 1:10pm-3:10pm
Oct. 16, Fri, 1:10pm-3:10pm
Oct. 21, Wed, 12pm-2pm
Oct. 22, Thu, 1:10pm-3:10pm
Oct. 23, Fri, 1:10pm-3:10pm

This course is 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 remarkable narrative structure, its beginning and ending movements, its word choices, its revelation of new intelligence, its demands 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 aired and 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 *To the Lighthouse* entirely and with intelligence, within a week of the course's commencement. Prompt attendance is absolutely required. Any absence will result in a grim no-pass.

The text edition we'll use is the Houghton Mifflin-Harcourt "Mariner Books" softcover, which is in stock at Book Culture, under the course number. I advise against reading the Eudora Welty foreword (or any foreword) before you read the novel.

Susan Hartman

Writing about Communities

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm
(Oct. 28 - Dec. 9)

In this master 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 midtown support group for transgender teens. We'll discuss: How do you gain access to a close-knit community? How do you establish trust? How do you ask difficult questions? We'll look at selected readings by journalists and authors, including N.R. Kleinfield, Rachel Aviv, and Joseph Mitchell. By the last class, students will have completed a short feature story.

Nalini Jones

Writing Back to the Canon: A Touch of Genius

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Wed., 10am-12pm
(Oct. 28 - Dec. 9)

In a 1964 letter, Jean Rhys wrote that although "The Brontë sisters had of course a touch of genius," she herself had been "vexed" by aspects of *Jane Eyre*. Two years later she published *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which "Bertha" Rochester is reimaged in a novel of her own. This course will consider some of the ways contemporary authors "write back" to authors whose works continue to inspire: Charlotte Brontë, Shakespeare, Anne Frank, Greek myths, and Edgar Allen Poe. We'll discuss the peculiar challenges and rewards of this kind of literary dialogue, with particular attention to form. We'll reflect on what it means to recast canonical material in an increasingly global context. And we'll experiment with retellings of our own.

Required reading below. The books that have inspired these novels (*Jane Eyre*, *Othello*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the myth of Heracles and Atlas, and an unfinished novel by Poe) are not required—but ideally students will have some knowledge of that work.

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Caryl Phillips, *The Nature of Blood*
Mat Johnson, *Pym*
Jeanette Winterson, *Weight*

Nicole Kear

Writing the “Unruly Body”

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Thu., 3:50pm-5:50pm
(Oct. 29 - Dec. 10)

“I am afraid to own a Body/ I am afraid to own a Soul/ Profound—precarious Property/
Possession, not optional.”

—Emily Dickinson

In this class we’ll explore narratives of what Roxane Gay calls the “unruly body,” a broad category that, for our purposes, includes bodies that refuse to obey, bodies that cannot be made to fit, bodies that are marked, by the self or others, as broken, dangerous or unstable.

All bodies exist in a state of flux, but for some, that fluidity remains persistently in the foreground of our stories. All bodies are visible, but for some, that visibility is amplified, obscured, or complicated by difference. Metamorphosis is at the heart of all our stories, but for some, that transformation takes on a distinctly physical manifestation.

We’ll investigate writings that conceive of the body as a cage, and ones that conceive of the body as a portal. We’ll look at the tensions between the body as it is observed and the body as it is inhabited, reading and writing across a private/public divide. Following in the footsteps of Woolf and Whitman, we’ll disrupt the hierarchy of mind over body, and investigate that complicated relationship.

In a relentlessly virtual time, marked by isolation, we’ll reckon with the body, that profound, precarious property.

Readings will include works by Jean-Dominique Bauby, Helen Keller, Roxane Gay, Virginia Woolf, Garnette Cadogan, Lidia Yuknavitch, Lucy Grealy, Lisa Taddeo, John Callahan, and Andre Dubus.

Tan Lin

Rules and the Poem

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
(Oct. 27 - Dec. 8)

This is a course on constraint-driven, prison-escape schemes, and rule-bound forms of composition, including work with nonsense, fixed forms such as the pantoum and sestina, punctuation excision and abbreviation/elision, tabulation and spreadsheet poems, cut ups, homophonic and dialect/idiolect translations, ingredient and to do lists, top-10 lists with irrelevant annotations, enumerative bibliographies, photographic captions, personal indexes, chronologically-based/diaristic accumulations, recipes of objects and atmospheric conditions, Wikipedia assemblages, experiences experienced as numbers which are then experienced as colors, and the footnote. Students will read, study, and amplify a number of constraint-based works. A significant portion of

the course will be geared to generating and workshopping student-generated work: poems, prose poems, abecedarians, bibliographic entries, top ten annotated lists, and counting poems for children and adults. The following books will be used in whole or in part: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*; Harryette Mullen, *S*PeRM**K*T*; Hannah Weiner, *Code Poems*; Ulises Carrion, *Arguments* and *(a, b, c)*; Brandon Brown, *The Four Seasons*; Sawako Nakayasu, *The Ants*; Charles Bernstein, *Asylum*; and Edouard Leve, *Autoportrait* and *Newspaper*.

Heather Radke

Small Potatoes: Writing Nonfiction about the Everyday

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Thu., 10am-12pm
(Oct. 29 - Dec. 10)

When sitting down to write an essay, it can be tempting to write into life's most difficult or exalted moments, which offer deep feelings and high drama. But the history of the essay shows us that there is also much material to be mined from the quotidian; subjects that at first seem boring can offer expansive territory for meaning-making.

In this class, we will read essays that take daily life as their subject and do creative exercises that prompt explorations of the seemingly-mundane. Readings will include work by E.B. White, May Sarton, Zadie Smith, Claudia Rankine, and others. We will do exercises inspired by Sister Corita Kent and the Young Chicago Authors to provoke curiosity about the world and learn how to do historical research that uncovers the hidden histories of everyday objects. The goal of the course is to offer students multiple ways to use moments of daily experience as artistic material and to raise questions about why our most traumatic and extraordinary experiences feel like the ones most worthy of writing about.

Camille Rankine

A World of Words

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Mon., 6pm-8pm
(Nov. 9 - Dec. 14)

How does a poem invite you into the reality it builds on the page? How does it welcome you in and show you where you are, what rules govern its lines, its language, and the life within it? In this six-week class, we'll explore the methods poets use to build the worlds—both real and imagined—that their words exist within. We'll examine how poets employ lexicon, voice, narrative, image, form, parable, and place to usher their reader into the landscapes of their work—in individual poems, and over the course of a collection. Class readings will include work by Gwendolyn Brooks, Franny Choi, Cynthia Cruz, Chamonghne Felix, Ilya Kaminsky, Ben Lerner, and Layli Long Soldier. Students will also have the opportunity to share their own work. Through our discussions, we'll consider what poems may teach us about how to engage with them on their own terms, and work to discover ways that we might engulf our readers in the worlds we build for them.

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

The Art of the Short Story: From Opening Line to Publication

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
(Sept. 15 - Oct. 20)

This six-week master class will cover some of the essential techniques of the short story like dialogue, detail, compression, and, of course, opening line. We'll examine the way ZZ Packer incorporates historical fact, how Tao Lin uses dialogue, where precisely A.M. Homes establishes tension, and why Marjane Satrapie "draws" her scenes the way she does. Class discussion may also include excerpts from film, songs, plays, poems, memoirs, newspaper articles, and anything else that can inform us of how stories are told. We'll put what we're learning into practice, of course, by writing our own short story, approximately seven pages, and seeing what elements are coming to life and what might need a little more breath. And finally, what should a writer do with a story when it's done—does it stay inside a drawer or does it get published? In other words, how exactly does one end up in, say, *The New Yorker*? This class may be able to come up with a roadmap.

Leonard Schwartz

Literary Art and the Language of Philosophy

6 sessions, 1.5 points

Thu., 1:10pm-3:10pm
(Sept. 10 - Oct. 15)

From Heraclitus to Blanchot, philosophers have sought to speak as poets, that is, to create a language in order to speak of that which seems to lie beyond the possibilities of expression. From Sappho to Proust, poets and fiction writers have engaged in epistemological inquiry and posed metaphysical questions, while delving into questions of narrative, time, image, perception, and the depiction of thought. To what extent can the language of philosophy offer an expressive register to our writing, be it poetry, creative nonfiction or fiction? By locating the central metaphors behind apparently rational arguments, and by asserting that poems and stories have cognitive and epistemic value, this master class seeks to broaden our sense of what is possible in writing. Readings will be drawn from the fragments of Heraclitus and Sappho and the verse of Ibn Arabi, as well as from modern and contemporary writers like Ezra Pound, Fanny Howe, Danish poet Inger Christenson and French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Always, the question is: how does the language of philosophy, once engaged with, add something to our range as writers?

James Wood

Fictional Technique in Novellas and Short Stories

4 sessions, 1 point

Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm
(Nov. 10 - Dec. 1)

In this class we will examine fictional technique in four short texts by Saul Bellow, Muriel Spark, Akhil Sharma, 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*
Akhil Sharma, *Family Life*
Lydia Davis, *Collected Stories*