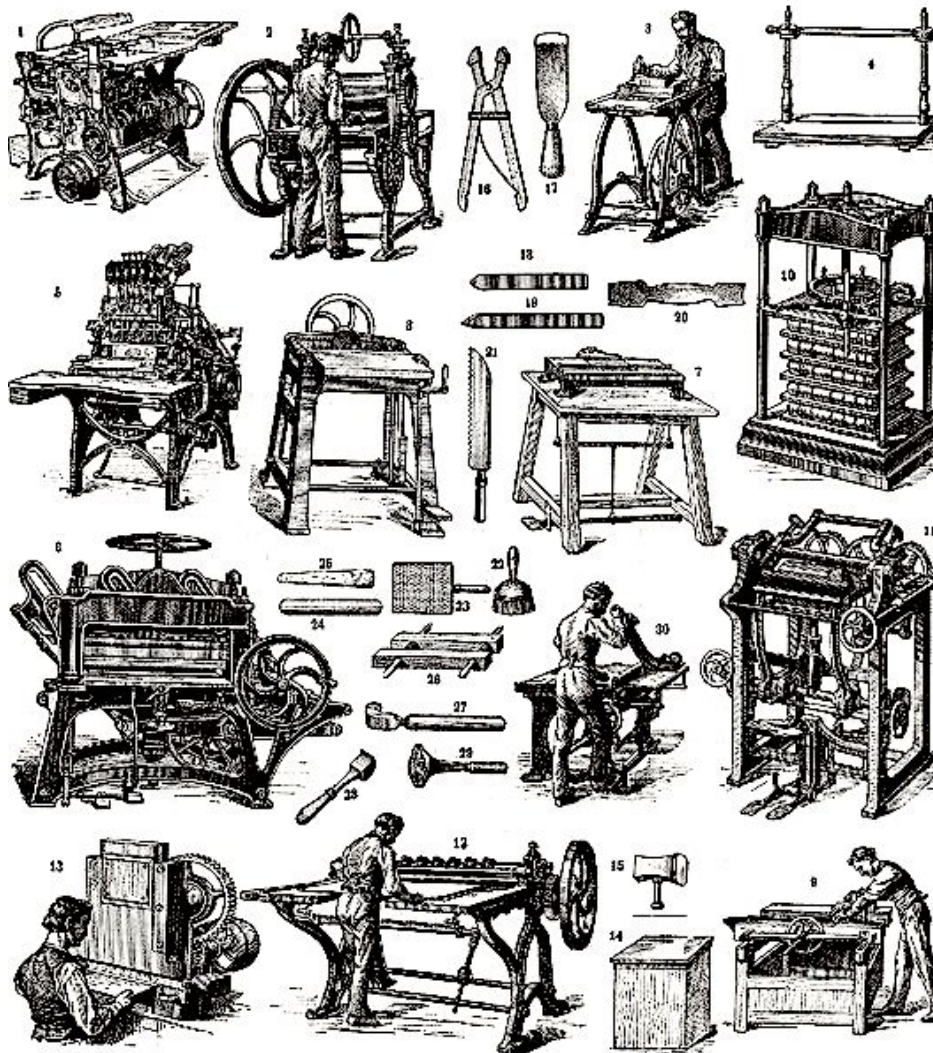


COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS | WRITING

SPRING 2021



# COURSEBOOK

Workshops | Seminars | Lectures

Updated November 25, 2020

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## WORKSHOPS

### FICTION - OPEN (6 points)

**Joshua Furst**

*Mon., 2pm-5pm*

**Lynn Steger Strong**

*Tue., 10am-1pm*

**Elliott Holt**

*Wed., 2pm-5pm*

**Diksha Basu**

*Thu., 10am-1pm*

**James Cañón**

*Thu., 2pm-5pm*

### NONFICTION - OPEN (6 points)

**Jennifer Percy**

*Mon., 10am-1pm*

**Phillip Lopate**

*Mon., 2pm-5pm*

**Kate Zambreno**

*Mon., 2pm-5pm*

**Richard Locke**

*Tue., 2pm-5pm*

**Wendy S. Walters**

*Tue., 2pm-5pm*

**Morgan Jerkins**

*Thu., 5:35pm-8:35pm*

**Adrian Nicole LeBlanc**

*Fri., 2pm-5pm*

### FICTION - THESIS (9 points)\*

**Heidi Julavits**

*Mon., 2pm-5pm*

**Victor LaValle**

*Tue., 10am-1pm*

**Binnie Kirshenbaum**

*Tue., 2pm-5pm*

**Ben Marcus**

*Tue., 2pm-5pm*

**Gary Shteyngart**

*Wed., 2pm-5pm*

**Paul Beatty**

*Thu., 2pm-5pm*

**Anelise Chen**

*Fri., 10am-1pm*

### POETRY - OPEN (6 points)

**Lynn Melnick**

*Tue., 10am-1pm*

**Deborah Paredez**

*Wed., 9:30am-12:30pm*

**Jay Deshpande**

*Fri., 2pm-5pm*

### POETRY - THESIS (9 points)\*

**Alan Gilbert**

*Tue., 5:35pm-8:35pm*

**Timothy Donnelly**

*Wed., 2pm-5pm*

**Shane McCrae**

*Thu., 10am-1pm*

**Dorothea Lasky**

*Thu., 5:35pm-8:35pm*

\*Second-Years only

## SEMINARS

### —MONDAY—

**Bela Shayevich (CG, TR)**

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

**Camille Rankine (PO)**

Poetry and the Politics of Identity  
*Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm*

**Ira Silverberg (FI)**

Writing From the Margins  
*Mon., 1:10pm-3:10pm*

**Brenda Wineapple (NF)**

Turn Every Page: Adventures in  
the Art of Research  
*Mon., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

**Erroll McDonald (FI)**

The Peripheral Writer  
*Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm*

**Ross Simonini (CG)**

Process Writing  
*Mon., 3:50pm-5:50pm*

**Mary Annaïse Heglar (NF)**

Getting Personal about the Climate Crisis  
*Mon., 6pm-8pm*

### —TUESDAY—

**Monica Ferrell (CG)**

The Art of Lying: A Cross-Genre  
Workshop in Fiction  
*Tue., 10am-12pm*

**Nalini Jones (FI)**

Myth and the Art of Storytelling  
*Tue., 10am-12pm*

**Maria Venegas (NF)**

Unconventional Memoir  
*Tue., 10am-12pm*

**Richard Ford (FI)**

Reading Short Stories Together  
*Tue., 1:10pm-3:10pm*

**Lis Harris (NF)**

Profiles  
*Tue., 2pm-4pm*

**Gary Shteyngart (FI)**

Strangers in a Strange Land: Immigrant  
Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries  
*Tue., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

**Thom Donovan (CG)**

Special Projects Workshop  
*Tue., 5:35pm-8:35pm*

Seminars and translation workshops are 3 points.  
The Special Projects Workshop is 6 points.

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

## SEMINARS (cont.)

—WEDNESDAY—

**Ruth Franklin (NF)**

The Writer as Critic

*Wed., 10am-12pm*

**Lara Vapnyar (FI)**

Architecture of the Story

*Wed., 10am-12pm*

**Margo Jefferson (NF)**

Third Form Narratives

*Wed., 2pm-4pm*

**Susan Bernofsky (CG, TR)**

Women of the World 2021 Edition:

Notions of (Dis)order

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

**Lynn Xu (PO)**

Provocations in Twentieth-Century Poetics

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

**Alan Ziegler (CG)**

Writer as Teacher

*Wed., 4:10pm-7:10pm*

—THURSDAY—

**Susan Bernofsky (CG, TR)**

Word for Word Workshop

*Thu., 10am-12:30pm*

**Keri Bertino (FI)**

The Art of Practice

*Thu., 10am-12pm*

**BK Fischer (CG)**

The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax,  
and Praxis

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

**Benjamin Hale (FI)**

Nonhuman Consciousness

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

**Richard Locke (NF, FI)**

Going to Interactive Extremes

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

**Katrina Dodson (CG, TR)**

Essay As Portraiture

*Thu., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

**Rebecca Godfrey (NF)**

Crime Scenes

*Thu., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

**Gabe Hudson (FI)**

Weird Fiction as a Political Tool

*Thu., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

—FRIDAY—

**Shane McCrae (PO)**

The Period Style

*Fri., 10am-12pm*

## LECTURES

### —TUESDAY—

**Alice Quinn**

The Poet's Story (3 points)

*Tue., 3:30pm-5:30pm*

### —WEDNESDAY—

**Joshua Cohen**

Long Century, Short Novels (3 points)

*Wed., 10am-12pm*

# SEMINARS

**Susan Bernofsky**

## **Women of the World 2021 Edition: Notions of (Dis)order**

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Wednesday, 4:10pm-6:10pm

A dozen years ago, the secretary of the Nobel Prize for Literature jury criticized the United States as being “too isolated, too insular,” saying we “don’t translate enough and don’t really participate in the big dialogue of literature.” This course is designed to investigate what the “big dialogue” of international writing looks like in 2021 by examining some of the most widely discussed and/or prize-winning international fiction by women to come out in English over the past several years. In particular, we’ll consider these fictional universes in terms of the notions of order (and disorder) they propose—often in response to dystopian circumstances—and examine the relationship between these frameworks and the writers’ structural and other artistic choices. In each case we will also consider both the role the translator has played as mediating subject and the reception of each book in English to get a better understanding of what happens when works are imported into a new cultural context and set of conversations. Readings variable, to be drawn from writers including Olga Tokarczuk, Yoko Tawada, Han Kang, Scholastique Mukasonga, Négar Djavadi, Jenny Erpenbeck, Leila Slimani, Han Yujoo, Madame Nielsen, Valeria Luiselli, Elena Ferrante, Dorte Nors, Amanda Michalopoulou, Nathalie Léger, Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, Igiaba Scego, Hanne Ørstavik, Marie NDiaye, Syaka Murata, Yoko Ogawa, Annie Ernaux, and others.

**Keri Bertino**

## **The Art of Practice**

(FICTION)

Thursday, 10am-12pm

Just as musicians practice scales and études, and dancers work at the barre, fiction writers turn to writing exercises to build strength, technique, flexibility and fluency.

This course will give students the opportunity to isolate and deliberately practice a range of fiction techniques, spanning the writing process from generation to the minutiae of revision.

In each two-hour meeting, students will work through a series of progressive exercises grounded in short readings and centered around a single theme. Weekly topics may include: establishing voice and point-of-view; writing beginnings and endings; playing with form; experimenting with genre; attending to sound; and drafting the stuff that makes many writers nervous, like race and class, sex and death, and jokes.

Throughout the course, writers will experience the community, guidance and encouragement that supports risk-taking. In our final classes, students will develop and facilitate their own writing exercises, addressing questions of technique that arise from their own work over the course of the semester. At semester's end, students will write a reflective essay, drawing examples from their ongoing fiction projects, to demonstrate how they've applied these techniques to their work.

**Katrina Dodson**

## **Essay As Portraiture**

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION)

Thursday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

In this course, we will roam and range over the transnational contours of the essay-portrait, a roving form that mingles the personal with the analytical, aiming to capture the essence of its subject with no claim to documentary or historical exhaustiveness. Our point of departure will be Montaigne's *essais* as experiments in thinking offered up as an ongoing self-portrait. We will consider works that map elements of the essay and portraiture, by Theodor Adorno, John Berger, and Gertrude Stein, and connect visual art to writing technique, from ekphrasis and Stein's poem-portraits, to Roland Barthes on photography. Discussions will focus on questions of representation and structure: To what extent does the essay project its author over the subject? What intimacies and obsessions motivate the text and how do they open onto broader social and historical concerns? What are the organizing principles of this non-linear, associative, fragmentary form? We will also sound out the boundaries of genre, asking what distinguishes (self) portraiture from (auto) biography and where essay bleeds into something else.

Translation will be a major through line, as we pay close attention to how translators complicate and replicate the author/subject relationship, compare translations of iconic texts, and consider translation itself as a mode of portraiture, thinking alongside Kate Briggs's *This Little Art*, Alejandro Zambra's "Translating a Person," and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's image-text collage *Dictee*. Readings will also include shorter sketches and book-length essays about individuals—Nathalie Léger's *Suite For Barbara Loden*, Natalia Ginzburg on family and friends in *The Little Virtues*, W.G. Sebald on Robert Walser—as well as portraits of public spaces and milieus, such as Valeria Luiselli on Mexico City, Clarice Lispector on Brasília, Sei Shonagon on 11<sup>th</sup>-century Japanese court life, and Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá on the streets of San Juan in *Cortijo's Wake*. Other possible portraiture artists include: Svetlana Alexievich, James Baldwin, Charles Baudelaire, Elizabeth Bishop, Fleur Jaeggy, John Keene, Chris Marker, and Maggie Nelson.



Monica Ferrell

## The Art of Lying: A Cross-Genre Workshop in Fiction

(CROSS-GENRE)

Tuesday, 10am-12pm

**Open to Nonfiction and Poetry students only.** This is a workshop-format course in the reading and writing of fiction for poets and nonfiction writers who are interested in developing their skills in a second genre. Every week we will investigate a different aspect of craft, including how to establish authority and credibility, narrative voice, vividness, recurring imagery, character and plot, and structure from a fiction writer's perspective. We will begin the semester by investigating how authors choose to open novels and stories, how one can get a story to move forward, and how sonic patterning operates in various prose works. We will read short fiction by Kate Braverman, Denis Johnson, Clarice Lispector, Carmen Maria Machado, Daniyal Mueenuddin, and George Saunders, among others, as well as two novels, the Lydia Davis translation of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Ben Lerner's *Leaving the Atocha Station*. Along the way, we will write three of our own stories—a flash fiction, a shorter story, and a longer story—all of which will come up for workshop.

B.K. Fischer

## The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis

(CROSS-GENRE)

Thursday, 1:10pm-3:10pm

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.

**Richard Ford**

## **Reading Short Stories Together**

(FICTION)

Tuesday, 1:10pm-3:10pm

A seminar course in which we'll read (together) a selection of short fiction, accompanied by an assortment of essays of a practical-critical bent. Among the story writers included will be those you may know and some you may not: Alice Munro, Alexander Hemon, Joy Williams, Anton Chekhov, Katherine Anne Porter; and also Claire Keegan, Sherman Alexie, Emma Cline, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Yiyun Li and others. Among the practical-critical essays will be those of Henry James, John Gardner, William H. Gass, Elizabeth Hardwick, Zadie Smith and others.

The principal goal of the course will be to use these short stories as, in essence, laboratories for observing how their authors manage to identify and address formal problems (narrative mode, diction, story structure, etc.), solve those problems, and ultimately to write excellently. We'll also hope to develop a plausible personal vocabulary for talking about our work's challenges, and in this manner (one might say) to learn how to read like a writer.

Time will also be allocated for conversation about "writing life" subjects—which go hand in hand with getting on with one's excellent work.

**Ruth Franklin**

## **The Writer as Critic**

(NONFICTION)

Wednesday, 10am-12pm

Writers have often privileged creative work and stigmatized criticism, calling it a lesser or derivative craft. But in fact creative writers often also write criticism, and developing the skills of a thoughtful critic will benefit you as an artist, helping you think concretely and constructively about how art works and the ways people derive meaning from it. This course will dig deep into both the practice of criticism and the philosophy behind it, delving into its history as a genre and exploring the many new forms it takes today. What should the primary role of a critic be—to build canons and define standards, to seek out the new, to advance a political argument? Should criticism strive to be objective, or should it be proudly personal? We'll read criticism of works in many different genres—film, music, art, TV, books—and criticism written in many different forms: review, essay, memoir, collage, profile, and more. And of course, we'll practice writing criticism in different forms, lengths, and styles, always with a view toward how thinking critically can help us become better writers. Readings will include works by Virginia Woolf, Susan Sontag, Teju Cole, John Berger, Zadie Smith, Hilton Als, Jenny Zhang, and others.

Rebecca Godfrey

## Crime Scenes

(NONFICTION)

Thursday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

Why is true crime such a compelling and popular genre? How can artists explore murder and violence in a manner that is insightful and complex? In this seminar, students will explore these questions as they select, investigate and write about a contemporary crime. Over the course of the semester, we will uncover and explore the essential elements of every crime story: the victim, the accused, motives, the act, arrests, investigation, trials and aftermath. Students will be required to conduct interviews, gather documents, attend or observe locations and legal proceedings. As this process of reporting a crime unfolds, we will discuss and delve into the risks and rewards of investigative work. How do we write about characters who are unreliable, troubled, often vilified, or marginalized? How do we avoid exploitation and voyeurism when writing about other's tragedies? How do we sustain and develop suspense and sympathy? How can these specific stories reveal larger political and social forces? We will also explore the ways we can tell these true stories in a manner that allows for inventive and important narratives. How do we turn the raw material of an interview, a police file, a search warrant, a violent act into art? Drawing on fiction, essay, and memoir, we will explore a range of approaches taken by authors who have written about criminals and contemporary tragedy, including Truman Capote, Joan Didion, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, Louise Erdrich, Nick Flynn, Jean Rhys, and Maggie Nelson.

Benjamin Hale

## Imagining Nonhuman Consciousness

(FICTION)

Thursday, 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.

Lis Harris

## Profiles

(NONFICTION)

Tuesday, 2pm-4pm

One of the few forms of literary nonfiction available to serious writers that is still welcome in the magazine world, the profile form provides an opportunity to lavish attention both on the breadth of the profile subject's life and on the profession, métier, or culture that is always the profile's second subject. We will examine exemplary profiles by masters of the form, including A.J. Liebling, Joe Mitchell, Kenneth Tynan, and Lillian Ross, and identify the qualities their essays, as well as more recent pieces, have in common. The authors we study will be used as models for one profile submission at the end of the semester. The course will emphasize selection, interview, and research techniques and affords a rare opportunity to explore an off-campus reported subject in depth. The problems and process of each student's work-in-progress will be discussed weekly.

Mary Annaïse Heglar

## Getting Personal about the Climate Crisis

(NONFICTION)

Monday, 6pm-8pm

The climate crisis is as much a scientific crisis as it is a deeply personal, heartbreaking one. This course seeks to create a safe space to explore the deep emotionality of the crisis through the art of the personal essay, with the goal of finding our own personal voice and agency in the face of an existential threat. Because the personal is political, and the personal is powerful. Each week, we will explore personal essays that look at the crisis through a new lens, with an emphasis on emotional depth and marginalized communities to weave together a bigger picture. Students will be encouraged to journal and space will be made available to share from their own writings. Given that the climate story is continually evolving, the reading list below is not exhaustive.

Readings:

- “Under the Weather” by Ash Sanders
- “Endlings” by Harriet Riley
- “We Need Courage Not Hope to Face Climate Change” by Kate Marvel
- “Is it Wrong to be Hopeful about Climate Change?” by Diego Arguedas Ortiz
- “The Case for Climate Rage” by Amy Westervelt
- “But the Greatest of These is Love” by Mary Annaïse Heglar
- “Time to Panic” by David Wallace Wells
- “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- “A Letter to My Nephew” from *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin
- “Climate Change Ain’t the First Existential Threat” by Mary Annaïse Heglar
- “What Listening Means in the Time of the Climate Crisis” by Tara Houska
- “Perhaps the World Ends Here” by Julian Brave NoiseCat
- “Climate Darwinism Makes Disabled People Expendable” by Imani Barbarin
- “When the Hero is the Problem” by Rebecca Solnit

“Who is the We in We Are Causing Climate Change” by Genevieve Geunther  
“In Defense of Eco-hypocrisy” by Sami Grover  
“On Being a Climate Person” by Eric Holthaus  
“The End Times Are Here and I’m at Target” by Hayes Brown  
“What if We Stopped Pretending the Climate Apocalypse Can Be Stopped?” by Jonathan Franzen  
“Home is Always Worth It” by Mary Annaïse Heglar  
“In 2030, We Solved the Climate Crisis, Here’s How” by Eric Holthaus

**Gabe Hudson**

## **Weird Fiction as a Political Tool**

(FICTION)

Thursday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

Chatbots spew hate speech, refugee children kept in cages, Black people routinely shot by police officers—welcome to our national horror show. This course is designed to empower writers’ imaginative storytelling prowess so they might better engage with our political moment. We’ll investigate how fiction writers can employ genre tropes and the narrative strategies of weird fiction to smuggle ideas into the culture. We’ll look to the examples of Octavia E. Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, and Rod Serling’s TV show “The Twilight Zone,” among others.

**Margo Jefferson**

## **Third Form Narratives**

(NONFICTION)

Wednesday, 2pm-4pm

This seminar will focus on texts that combine art forms, genres, and styles in multiple ways. Texts that join fact with fiction to interrogate the uses and implications of both. Texts in which the visual and verbal, the spoken and written cohabit to create a third interactive language. Texts that merge or juxtapose research and imagination. Texts that achieve their meaning through fragments and associations; narrative (and narrator) ambiguities and contradictions.

**Nalini Jones**

## **Myth and the Art of Storytelling**

(FICTION)

Tuesday, 10am-12pm

We’ll begin with a brief discussion of Greek mythology and ancient literature, discussing myths that continue to shape cultural ideas about love, war, family, sacrifice, politics, friendship, punishment, honor, and storytelling itself. Then we’ll explore some of the ways those stories and archetypes

have been reconsidered in contemporary literature. Readings will include poems, novels, and short fiction, and students will have a chance to view various forms of art or material culture as prompts for new work. Students can choose poetry or fiction for in-class writing exercises, although the culminating creative assignment will be fiction.

A tentative reading list will include work from among the following:

Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*  
Margaret Atwood, *The Penelopiad*  
Pat Barker, *The Silence of the Girls*  
A. P. Bucak, "The Trojan War Museum"  
Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red*  
Annabel Lyon, *The Golden Mean*  
Z. Z. Packer, "Brownies"  
Jim Shepard, "My Aeschylus"  
Barry Unsworth, *The Songs of the Kings*  
Eudora Welty, "Shower of Gold"  
Jeanette Winterson, *Weight*  
selected poems by Duffy, Glück, Rilke, Stallings  
excerpts from Zachary Mason, *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*  
excerpt from William Saroyan, *The Human Comedy*

**Richard Locke**

## Going to Interactive Extremes

(NONFICTION, FICTION)

Thursday, 1:10pm-3:10pm

These twelve books exult in the interaction of nonfiction and fiction—they imitate, appropriate, crossbreed, and deploy a great variety of literary forms. In addition to narrative design, character development, and patterns of imagery and metaphor, they draw on memoir, polemic, meditation, biography, history, and cultural commentary.

They conspicuously explore the flexibility of nonfiction and fiction, and most are obsessed with history—intensely responsive to the contentious interaction of past and present, tradition and innovation—and often set a character on a quest that is both desperately personal and culturally combative.

Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*  
George Orwell, *1984*  
Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, The Novel as History*  
Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*  
Jorge Luis Borges, *Selected Fictions*  
Thomas Bernhard, *Wittgenstein's Nephew*  
Edmund de Waal, *The Hare With Amber Eyes*  
Max Frisch, *Man in the Holocene*

Italo Calvino, *The Baron in the Trees*  
Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Gate of Angels*  
J.M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*  
W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*

**Shane McCrae**

## The Period Style

(POETRY)

Friday, 10am-12pm

What makes us what we are as poets? How much do we choose, and how much is chosen for us? Is self-expression self-determined, or is each of us trampled by the period in which we express ourselves? And does what makes us what we are as poets change over time? If so, to what extent? In this seminar/workshop we will read and discuss our way through 20<sup>th</sup>-century American poetry—primarily American, at least—decade by decade, starting in the 1890s and ending in the 2010s, in an effort to determine the most important aspects of the dominant poetic style of each decade. Students will be required to submit a poem each week in the style of the decade under consideration.

**Erroll McDonald**

## The Peripheral Writer

(FICTION)

Monday, 3:50pm-5:50pm

What is literature's global economy of prestige and what are its inequalities? Which is to say, where, how, why, and by whom is universal literary value conferred? If you are a writer from, say, Cape Verde, Romania, New Zealand, Jamaica, Algeria, Ethiopia, or even parts of the American South or Midwest—places whose literary traditions are deemed peripheral by the centers of consecration (Paris, New York, London, Barcelona, Rome, Frankfurt), what are the singular vicissitudes you must face, what literary norms at home or abroad must you either embrace or breach, to achieve international renown?

This course offers close readings of works in English or translation by 20th-century writers from around the world who were once marginalized but are now considered central to literary enterprise. The authors and books considered are likely to be: *The Loser*, Thomas Bernhard (Austria); *Pedro Paramo*, Juan Rulfo (Mexico); *Solibo Magnifique*, Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique); *The Blind Owl*, Sadegh Hedayat (Iran); *The Sound and the Fury*, William Faulkner (New Albany, Mississippi); *Ferdymurke*, Witold Gombrowicz (Poland); *The Passion According to G.H.*, Clarice Lispector (Ukraine, Brazil); *The Box Man*, Kobo Abe (Japan); *A Bend in the River*, V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad and Tobago); *My Name is Red*, Orhan Pamuk (Turkey); *The Ten Thousand Things*, Maria Dermout (Dutch West Indies); and *Broken Glass*, Alain Mabanckou (Republic of the Congo).

While the course aims to identify and examine their singularity of achievement by way of assimilation or differentiation, it is chiefly concerned with similarities and dissimilarities of narrative structure and strategy, language and syntax, imagery, time and place, and character development.

The course requirements are: a short (3-5 pages) piece of literary criticism on a clearly defined topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor—which will be orally presented to the class—and a 12-15 page final exercise in imitation of any writer covered during the semester.

**Camille Rankine**

## **Poetry and The Politics of Identity**

(POETRY)

Monday, 1:10pm-3:10pm

How does identity color our reading or alter our expectations of a poem? How does a poet's identity inform their poetic approach? In this course, we'll shift our focus from poetry to poet, text to context, and back, as we explore how the poet's identity operates both within their work and outside of it. Through class discussion and readings of poetry and essays—including work by poets such as Ari Baniyas, Chen Chen, Eduardo Corral, Cornelius Eady, Marwa Helal, Audre Lorde, José Olivarez, Claudia Rankine, Cameron Awkward Rich, Solmaz Sharif, and others—we'll approach questions of permission, permissibility, responsibility, appropriation, and the identity poetics and politics at play in the evolving landscape of contemporary American poetry.

**Gary Shteyngart**

## **Strangers in a Strange Land: Immigrant Literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

(FICTION)

Tuesday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

This class will survey 20th- and early 21st-century immigrant literature in the United States. We will begin with Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, a brutal tale of one boy's assimilation in the Yiddish-speaking New York of the early 1900s, to be followed with Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin*, a novel chronicling the comic misadventures of a high-born but disaster-prone Russian émigré in the 1950s. The class will then focus on the incredible explosion of hyphenated literature in the past fifteen years, including writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Imbolo Mbue, Akhil Sharma, and Chang-rae Lee, with special attention paid to the way native and foreign cultures are blended together in language and description. We will also read Sigrid Nunez's recent novel *The Last of Her Kind*, and consider the ways in which working class and immigrant narratives both differ and complement one another. A paper, at least five pages in length, either analytical or a work of fiction related to the material covered, will be due at the end of the class.



Readings:

Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep*  
Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation of a Beheading*  
Chang-rae Lee, *Native Speaker*  
Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies*  
Akhil Sharma, *An Obedient Father*  
Sigrid Nunez, *The Last of Her Kind*

**Ira Silverberg**

## **Writing from the Margins: Opening the Doors to Otherness**

(FICTION)

Monday, 1:10pm-3:10pm

Beginning with the premise that the margins of our culture define the mainstream rather than the reverse, this course surveys mid- to late twentieth-century writers who challenged the status quo with the voice of otherness. The syllabus includes a range of poetry, memoir, and fiction by writers including Kathy Acker, Darius James, William Burroughs, Audre Lorde, David Wojnarowicz, and Valerie Solanas. Many of the writers were once junkies; prostitutes; criminals; victims of abuse; or Queer before it was spelled with a capital Q. This notion of otherness is further articulated by ethnicity; sexual “deviance;” disability; or an affiliation with radical politics. However, those once defined by otherness often find their status transformed by societal acceptance and assimilation. Many are “mainstreamed” as their once “marginalized” voices are heard, published, and validated. Some springboard to a place of privilege and centrality in a culture that once eschewed and victimized them. So, what does “otherness” or “marginalized” mean today? This is the inquiry here. Students will be required to write one paper and present multimedia biographical portraits of the writers studied to the class.

Course reading may include:

*Naked Lunch*, William S. Burroughs  
*The Selected Writings of Audre Lorde*, edited by Roxanne Gay  
*Short Eyes*, Miguel Pinero  
*Close to The Knives*, David Wojnarowicz  
*Blood and Guts in High School*, Kathy Acker  
*Closer*, Dennis Cooper  
*Paul Takes the Form of a Mortal Girl*, Andrea Lawlor  
*Negrophobia* (reissue from NYRB Classics), Darius James  
*The Scum Manifesto*, Valerie Solanas

**Ross Simonini**

## **Process Writing**

(CROSS-GENRE)

Monday, 3:50pm-5:50pm

The act of writing is often mythologized, romanticized, or dismissed as peripheral to the text itself. This course will address the process as a primary lens for looking at art. It will focus on literature that explicitly investigates the experience of its creation. Readings will include writings by visual artists who produce documents of performances, surrealists who use “automatic” methods to reveal the unconscious, poets who seek to capture states of enlightenment or intoxication, and novelists who employ extreme conditions to achieve unexpected results. For the class, students will experiment with their environment, lifestyle, and methods to increase their awareness of how everything they do can affect what appears on the page.

**Lara Vapnyar**

## **Architecture of a Story**

(FICTION)

Wednesday, 10am-12pm

We will start the class with the analysis of this famous quote by Alice Munro: “A story is not like a road to follow... it’s more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows.”

We will discuss what it is about a story that makes it “more like a house,” and which elements of the story could be considered windows, rooms, or corridors. Then we will examine all the significant types of structure, from traditional to experimental, and study how to determine which structure to choose for a particular type of a narrative.

The readings will include short stories and novels by Alice Munro, Jorge Luis Borges, Vladimir Nabokov, James Baldwin, Margaret Atwood, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, Jennifer Egan, and Elena Ferrante.

**Maria Venegas**

## **Unconventional Memoir**

(NONFICTION)

Tuesday, 10am-12pm

This seminar is designed for students who want to bend the genres and explore how fiction crafting techniques can be utilized to make nonfiction more compelling. How does one take life’s material and mold it into a fresh and evocative literary form by taking creative liberties all while staying true

to the facts? Crafting techniques to be discussed include narrative movement, presentation of backstory, building tension, commitment to point of view, recreating dialogue, and structure.

Works of fiction and nonfiction will be discussed including Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, which is structured like a collection of short stories rather than a traditional linear memoir. Similarly, Nick Flynn's *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* abandons the conventional form and is assembled like a collage of fragmented memories. Other authors to be discussed include Elizabeth Strout, Peter Carey, Tracy K. Smith, James Schuyler, Kurt Vonnegut, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Truman Capote, Amy Tan, Roberto Bolaño, and others.

All material will be approached with an eye for craft. Writing is about making choices. Our task is to identify the choices these authors made to bring their stories to life and incorporate these lessons into our own narratives.

**Brenda Wineapple**

## **Turn Every Page: Adventures in the Art of Research**

(NONFICTION)

Monday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

This hybrid seminar (seminar/workshop) for all students (poetry, fiction, nonfiction) provides an introduction to the research methods practiced by any writer who incorporates historical, documentary, or other primary and secondary materials into their work. We discuss public, archival and electronic sources (where to find them, what to do with them) as well as reportorial and other techniques for gathering, organizing, filing, synthesizing, and ultimately using such material—and the actual ethics involved in finding, reporting, and using. We begin with an overview of method and technique, answering how we imagine what materials or sources we need, how we go about locating them, what we do with the material we discover and how we evaluate it; we do so with readings from such authors as Janet Malcolm, Arlette Farge, and Robert Caro. We'll apply their means and methods directly to our work, which we'll be discussing in workshop format, to see how best to integrate our findings and our response to these findings into our stories or poetry.

Because students should bring to the seminar a specific subject that they are researching, during the seminar students will also discuss what kind of research conundrums they have encountered, so that we can focus specifically on individual projects and the questions—empirical *and* ethical—they raise.

**Lynn Xu**

## **Provocations in Twentieth-Century Poetics**

(POETRY)

Wednesday, 4:10pm-6:10pm

This is a class about poetry and revolt. In a century of wars, unchecked proliferation of industrial and market systems in the continued legacy of settler-colonialism and the consolidation of state

powers, does language still conduct with revolutionary possibilities? In this class, we will read manifestos, philosophical treatises, political tracts, literary polemics, poems, scores, and so on, as we consider poetry's long-standing commitment to visionary practices that seek to liberate consciousness from the many and various structures of oppression. The term "poetry" is not limited to itself but becomes, in our readings, an open invitation to all adjacent experiments with and in the language arts. As such, we will look at the emergence of the international avant-gardes as well as worker and student movements that populate and complicate the explorations of radical politics in the twentieth century. Readings from Bakunin, Breton, Celan, Césaire, Debord, de Beauvoir, Fanon, Hernandez, Huidobro, Khayati, Khatibi, Kropotkin, Marinetti, Marx, Nietzsche, Senghor, Tzara, Vicuña, Zurita, and many others.

**Alan Ziegler**

## **Writer as Teacher**

(CROSS-GENRE)

Wednesday, 4:10pm-7:10pm

Writer as Teacher is a hybrid course: part seminar and part practicum. We will discuss the role of the writer in the classroom and address the pedagogical and editorial skills utilized in eliciting and responding to creative writing, including: creating and presenting writing assignments; designing and running workshops; presiding over group critiques and individual conferences. We will discuss the teaching of creative writing at all levels (primary and secondary schools, undergraduate and graduate programs), and there will be one or two visits from exemplary practitioners of the art and craft of teaching. In the third class-hour, we will replicate classroom situations in small groups; on any given Wednesday, we may use none, some, or all of the third hour. A wide variety of reading material will be handed out, much of which will be used as "background" material and not discussed specifically in class. There will be several short, practical written assignments and presentations. Each student will design (with the option to teach) a mini-course (4-6 sessions) as part of the CA/T Community Classes (CCC) offering.

# Special Projects Workshop

Thom Donovan

Tuesday, 5:35pm-8:35pm

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.

# Translation Workshops

**Susan Bernofsky**

## Word for Word Translation Workshop

Thursday, 10am-12:30pm

Word for Word is an initiative in collaborative translation housed within the Writing Program's joint course of study Literary Translation at Columbia (LTAC). The program pairs School of the Arts students with peer writers in foreign-language MFA programs to translate one another's work. Its purpose is not only to provide emerging translators with experience and a global network, but also to encourage writers to engage with their own language in a new and deeper way through the medium of literary translation and the experience of cross-cultural collaboration. Application information will be distributed via email by the Writing Program.

**Bela Shayevich**

## Literary Translation Workshop

Monday, 10am-12:30pm

This workshop is open to students translating from all languages at all levels, from novice to experienced, and within or across all genres: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. It is 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

Joshua Cohen

## Long Century, Short Novels

Wednesday, 10am-12pm

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 several short novels written during the long twentieth century. 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 Tenth Man*, Graham Greene  
*A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, Peter Handke  
*Sleepless Nights*, Elizabeth Hardwick  
*The Blind Owl*, Sadegh Hedayat  
*Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann  
*The Plains*, Gerald Murnane  
*Guerillas*, V.S. Naipaul  
*Black Water*, Joyce Carol Oates  
*Do You Hear Them?*, Nathalie Sarraute  
*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Leo Tolstoy  
*The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Amos Tutuola  
*Ethan Frome*, Edith Wharton

Alice Quinn

## The Poet's Story

Tuesday, 3:30pm-5:30pm

My predecessor as poetry editor of *The New Yorker* where I worked from 1987-2007 was Howard Moss who held that position from 1948-1986, a distinguished poet who won the National Book Award for his *Selected Poems* in 1972 and an influential essayist as well as a marvelously receptive editor who discovered many new voices for the magazine, from Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, and John Berryman to Louise Glück, James Wright, Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, and Rita Dove.

Moss edited an anthology of prose by poets with the title *The Poet's Story* in 1973, and in this class I'd like to revisit some of the prose he featured in that volume as well as new stories, essays, and memoirs by some of our finest contemporary poets.

This past semester, we had eight guest poets to class—Dana Levin, Rick Barot, Deborah Garrison, Matthew Zapruder, Tomas Q. Morin, Richie Hofmann, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, and Ada Limon. Next term, we'll also have marvelous poets to explore some of their favorite prose by poets with us.

This list may change, but this is a beginning. All the writers are primarily poets whose prose is exceptional. We will read select poems by each alongside the prose listed below.

Louise Bogan's memoir, *Journey Around My Room*.  
Sylvia Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar*  
Robert Hayden's *Collected Prose*  
Elizabeth Bishop's memoirs, *A Country Mouse* and *Memories of Uncle Neddy*, and her story, *In the Village*  
Gwendolyn Brooks' novel, *Maud Martha*  
James Merrill's memoir, *A Different Person*  
Lucille Clifton's memoir, *Good Woman*  
W.S. Merwin's memoir, *Unframed Originals*  
Eavan Boland, *A Journey with Two Maps: Becoming a Woman Poet*  
Bei Dao's *Autobiography*, translated by Jeffrey Yang  
Louise Glück's collection of essays, *Proofs & Theories*  
Ben Lerner's novel, *Leaving the Atoka Station* and essay, *Hatred of Poetry*  
Terrance Hayes, *To Float in the Space In Between*, his meditation on his relationship to the figure and the work of Etheridge Knight

Requirements: Two two-page papers and (if possible) memorization of sixty lines of poetry in any combination, a long poem or a number of shorter ones.