SPRING 2020 COURSE DESCRIPTION

All students are eligible for seminars and beginning workshops, though space is limited. If the class is full, add your name to the SSOL waitlist and attend the first day. **Students may take only one workshop per semester and two seminars per semester.** Intermediate, advanced & senior workshops require a writing sample. Please visit our 609 Kent office or our website at http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 1100  Beginning Fiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in fiction is designed for students who have little or no previous experience writing literary texts in fiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through creative exercises and discussions, and eventually produce their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. The focus of the course is on the rudiments of voice, character, setting, point of view, plot, and the lyrical use of language. Students will begin to develop the critical skills that will allow them to read like writers and understand, on a technical level, how accomplished creative writing is produced. Outside readings of a wide range of fiction supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

*Instructors*
Sec 01  Ryan Avanzado
Sec 02  Elly Graff
Sec 03  Jared Jackson
Sec 04  Alex Ulloa

WRIT UN 1200  Beginning Nonfiction Workshop

The beginning workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with little or no experience in writing literary nonfiction. Students are introduced to a range of technical and imaginative concerns through exercises and discussions, and they eventually submit their own writing for the critical analysis of the class. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects.

*Instructors*
Sec 01  Jacob Carroll
Sec 02  Jessica Colley Clarke
Sec 03  Vivian Nixon

WRIT UN 1300  Beginning Poetry Workshop

The beginning poetry workshop is designed for students who have a serious interest in poetry writing but who lack a significant background in the rudiments of the craft and/or have had little or no previous poetry workshop experience. Students will be assigned weekly writing exercises emphasizing such aspects of verse composition as the poetic line, the image, rhyme and other sound devices, verse forms, repetition, tone, irony, and others. Students will also read an extensive variety of exemplary work in verse, submit brief critical analyses of poems, and critique each other's original work.

*Instructor*
Sec 01  Kate Greene
Sec 02  Anastasios Karnazes
INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 2100  Intermediate Fiction Workshop

Intermediate workshops are for students with some experience with creative writing, and whose prior work merits admission to the class (as judged by the professor). Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops, and increased expectations to produce finished work. By the end of the semester, each student will have produced at least seventy pages of original fiction. Students are additionally expected to write extensive critiques of the work of their peers.

Instructors
Sec 01  Heidi Julavits
Sec 02  Crystal Hana Kim

WRIT UN 2200  Intermediate Nonfiction Workshop

The intermediate workshop in nonfiction is designed for students with some experience in writing literary nonfiction. Intermediate workshops present a higher creative standard than beginning workshops and an expectation that students will produce finished work. Outside readings supplement and inform the exercises and longer written projects. By the end of the semester, students will have produced thirty to forty pages of original work in at least two traditions of literary nonfiction.

Instructor
Sec 01  Will Hunt

WRIT UN 2300  Intermediate Poetry Workshop

Intermediate poetry workshops are for students with some prior instruction in the rudiments of poetry writing and prior poetry workshop experience. Intermediate poetry workshops pose greater challenges to students and maintain higher critical standards than beginning workshops. Students will be instructed in more complex aspects of the craft, including the poetic persona, the prose poem, the collage, open-field composition, and others. They will also be assigned more challenging verse forms such as the villanelle and also non-European verse forms such as the pantoum. They will read extensively, submit brief critical analyses, and put their instruction into regular practice by composing original work that will be critiqued by their peers. By the end of the semester each student will have assembled a substantial portfolio of finished work.

Instructor
Sec 01  Dorothea Lasky

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3100  Advanced Fiction Workshop

Building on the work of the Intermediate Workshop, Advanced Workshops are reserved for the most accomplished creative writing students. A significant body of writing must be produced and revised. Particular attention will be paid to the components of fiction: voice, perspective, characterization, and form. Students will be expected to finish several short stories, executing a total artistic vision on a piece of writing. The critical focus of the class will include an examination of endings and formal wholeness, sustaining narrative arcs, compelling a reader’s interest for the duration of the text, and generating a sense of urgency and drama in the work.

Instructors
Sec 01  Marie Myung-Ok Lee
Sec 02  Sam Lipsyte
SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3101  Senior Fiction Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

_Instructor_
Sec 01  Victor LaValle

WRIT UN 3201  Senior Nonfiction Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

_Instructor_
Sec 01  Camille Bromley

WRIT UN 3301  Senior Poetry Workshop

Seniors who are majors in creative writing are given priority for this course. Enrollment is limited, and is by permission of the professor. The senior workshop offers students the opportunity to work exclusively with classmates who are at the same high level of accomplishment in the major. Students in the senior workshops will produce and revise a new and substantial body of work. In-class critiques and conferences with the professor will be tailored to needs of each student.

_Instructor_
Sec 01  Dorothea Lasky
SEMILNARS

WRIT UN 3115 Make It Strange

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

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

Instructor
Tracy O’Neill

WRIT UN 3123 An Earnest Look at Irony

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

With an eye toward technique, we will attempt to answer these and further questions by time spent among the words of those who fall all along, though often refuse to stay put on, the earnest-ironic continuum. Students will be expected to write three stories or essays throughout the semester, exploring for themselves this treacherous but eminently skiable slope.

With readings from Robert Frost, Stevie Smith, Charles Baudelaire, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), James Joyce, Raymond Carver, James Baldwin, Vladimir Nabokov, Joan Didion, Donald Barthelme, George Saunders, Virginia Woof, Zadie Smith, Gertrude Stein, Jamaica Kincaid, James Agee, Isak Dinesen, David Foster Wallace, Lydia Davis, Clarice Lispector, and Paul West.

Instructor
Ben Metcalf

WRIT UN 3126 Animal Tales

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

Instructor
Anelise Chen
WRIT UN 3127  Time Moves Both Ways

What is time travel, really? We can use a machine or walk through a secret door. Take a pill or fall asleep and wake up in the future. But when we talk about magic machines and slipstreams and Rip Van Winkle, we are also talking about memory, chronology, and narrative. In this seminar, we will approach time travel as a way of understanding "the Fourth Dimension" in fiction. Readings will range from the speculative to the strange, to the realism of timelines, flashbacks, and shifts in perspective. Coursework will include short, bi-weekly writing assignments, a completed short story, and a time-inflected adaptation.

Instructor
Hilary Leichter

WRIT UN 2211  Traditions In Nonfiction

The seminar provides exposure to the varieties of nonfiction with readings in its principal genres: reportage, criticism and commentary, biography and history, and memoir and the personal essay. A highly plastic medium, nonfiction allows authors to portray real events and experiences through narrative, analysis, polemic or any combination thereof. Free to invent everything but the facts, great practitioners of nonfiction are faithful to reality while writing with a voice and a vision distinctively their own. To show how nonfiction is conceived and constructed, class discussions will emphasize the relationship of content to form and style, techniques for creating plot and character under the factual constraints imposed by nonfiction, the defining characteristics of each author's voice, the author's subjectivity and presence, the role of imagination and emotion, the uses of humor, and the importance of speculation and attitude. Written assignments will be opportunities to experiment in several nonfiction genres and styles.

Instructor
Mark Rozzo

WRIT UN 3219  Writing As Collecting

In Writing as Collecting we will examine how the concept of collecting provides a way to think through writing. We will read writing based from art, archives, and other collections, from antiquity to the contemporary, from the commonplace to the rarified. We will consider how writers have written distinctively through a collecting impulse or about specific collections. While our focus will be on works of nonfiction, we will also take forays into fiction, poetry, visual art, and the cinematic essay. Students will present on specific objects or collections, and two classes will take place in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library (located on the 6th floor of Butler Library): the first as an introduction and orientation to the collections with a discussion of how research can feed creative writing, and, the second, for an in-class exercise in writing creatively about an specific object or collection (a book, manuscript, archival box, etc.). Students will be encouraged to write about their own collections and to use the many public (or private) collections found throughout the city of New York.

Instructor
John Vincler

WRIT UN 3221 Auto: Writing The Self

From autobiography to autofiction, and autoethnography to autotheory, the subjective self in literature has become a literary obsession. In this course, we'll confront the subjective self in a range of U.S. and international literary and theory works. We will look at auto's literary roots which extend back through 16th century France to 10th century Japan to 4th century Numidia, and beyond—and how they radiate outward to encompass trans poetics, Black Studies, psychology, and ethnography. We'll review the audacity of self-assertion from Montaigne's 16th-century efforts to Roland Barthes' postmodern innovation in Roland Barthes, and the politics of auto from Christina Crosby's self-imaging in A Body,
Undone to Audre Lorde's subversion of discourses of "theory" in Zami. We'll seek to ask: What does the grappling with the self indicate about a society's political, cultural, and literary concerns? Is our present-day obsession with personal narrative individualist self-indulgence, or an historical mode of inquiry with subversive power? We'll conduct a sustained inquiry into the auto's aesthetic, political, and rhetorical forms, while allowing ourselves to be moved creatively by the transgressions of genre conventions and philosophical discourses that auto-work precipitates.

Instructor
Melody Nixon

WRIT UN3315 Poetic Meter And Form
This course will investigate the uses of rhythmic order and disorder in English-language poetry, with a particular emphasis on 'formal' elements in 'free' verse. Through a close analysis of poems, we'll examine the possibilities of qualitative meter, and students will write original creative work within (and in response to) various formal traditions. Analytical texts and poetic manifestoes will accompany our reading of exemplary poems.

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

Instructor
Joseph Fasano

WRIT UN3011 Translation Seminar: Intro to T & P
You don't have to be bilingual to take this course. Several years of study of another language is enough.

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

Instructor
Rose Waldman

WRIT UN3014 Structure & Style
This seminar explores fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama, as related disciplines. While each genre has its particular opportunities and demands, all can utilize such devices as narrative, dialogue, imagery, and description (scenes, objects, and thought processes). Through a wide variety of readings and writing exercises, we will examine and explore approaches to language, ways of telling a story (linear and nonlinear), and how pieces are constructed. Some student work will be briefly workshopped.

Instructor
Daniel Magariel
WRIT UN 3017  Incarcerated Yet Inspired: Exploring Criminal Justice Through Creative Writing

Incarcerated Yet Inspired is a cross-genre, creative writing seminar. Over the course of this semester, we will conduct a close reading of literary works that are based on the lives of individuals who have been ostracized, incarcerated, and isolated from their communities. While some of the writers we will study have been personally affected by the criminal justice system, others have drawn upon their research, observations, and experiences working in prisons to tell a compelling story. Through our weekly analysis and discussion, we will explore the thematic elements and artistic choices each writer employs in their work. We will also challenge our existing thoughts about prisons as an institution and develop a better understanding of how the prism of art and justice can be valuable to you as writers.

Instructor
Christopher Wolfe

WRIT UN 3018  Inhabiting Form

The body is our most immediate encounter with the world, the vessel through which we experience our entire lives: pleasure, pain, beauty, horror, limitation, freedom, fragility and empowerment. In this course, we will pursue critical and creative inquiries into invocations and manifestations of the body in multiple genres of literature and in several capacities. We will look at how writers make space for—or take up space with—bodies in their work.

The etymology of the word “text” is from the Latin textus, meaning “tissue.” Along these lines, we will consider the text itself as a body. Discussions around body politics, race, gender, ability, illness, death, metamorphosis, monstrosity and pleasure will be parallel to the consideration of how a text might function itself as a body in space and time. We will consider such questions as: What is the connective tissue of a story or a poem? What is the nervous system of a lyric essay? How is formal constraint similar to societal ideals about beauty and acceptability of certain bodies? How do words and language function at the cellular level to build the body of a text? How can we make room to honor, in our writing, bodies that have otherwise been marginalized?

Instructor
Samantha Zighelboim