SPRING 2018 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 UN1100 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 Tyler Curtis
Sec 02 Theresa Hottel
Sec 03 Nicola Sebastian
Sec 04 Sihan Tan

**WRIT UN1200 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 Moeko Fujii
Sec 02 Trenton Pollard

**WRIT UN1300 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 Rashida Williams
INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN2100 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 Kathleen Alcott
Sec 02 Patty Yumi Cottrell

WRIT UN2200 Intermediate Nonfiction Workshop

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

Instructor
Sec 01 John Vincler

WRIT UN2300 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 Diana Delgado

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN3100 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 Hillary Leichter
SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN3101 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 Sarah Gerard

WRIT UN3201 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
Section 01 Emily Gould

WRIT UN3301 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
Section 01 Alex Dimitrov

SEMINARS

WRIT UN2110 Approaches To The Short Story

The modern short story has gone through many transformations, and the innovations of its practitioners have often pointed the way for prose fiction as a whole. The short story has been seized upon and refreshed by diverse cultures and aesthetic affiliations, so that perhaps the only stable definition of the form remains the famous one advanced by Poe, one of its early masters, as a work of fiction that can be read in one sitting. Still, common elements of the form have emerged over the last century and this course will study them, including point of view, plot, character, setting and theme. John Hawkes once famously called these last four elements the “enemies of the novel,” and many short story writers have seen them as hindrances as well. Hawkes later recanted, though some writers would still agree with his earlier assessment, and this course will examine the successful strategies of great writers across the spectrum of short story practice, from traditional approaches to more radical solutions, keeping in mind how one period’s revolution—Hemingway, for example—becomes a later era’s mainstream or “commonsense” storytelling mode. By reading the work of major writers from a writer’s perspective, we will examine the myriad techniques employed for what is finally a common goal: to make readers feel. Short writing exercises will help us explore the exhilarating subtleties of these elements and how the effects created by their manipulation or even outright absence power our most compelling fictions.

Instructor
Sec 01 Ben Marcus
WRIT UN3112  The First Person

Today, in the age of memoir, we don't need to apologize for speaking in the first person, but we still need to find a way to make a first person, fictional narrative forceful and focused. The logic is different, the danger the same: we must find a form that will shape an "I" account and render it rhetorically compelling, giving it the substance and complexity of literary art. In this craft seminar, we will begin by reading critical background about the early uses of first-person in fiction. We will study how these functioned in the societies they commented on, and chart the changing use of first person in western literature from the eighteenth century to today. Through reading contemporary novels, stories and novellas, we will analyze first person in its various guises: the "I" as witness (reliable or not), as elegist, outsider, interpreter, diarist, apologist, and portraitist. Towards the end of the semester we will study more unusual forms: first-person plural, first-person omniscient, first-person rotating. We will supplement our reading with craft-oriented observations by master-writers. Students will complete four to five fiction pieces of their own in which they will implement specific approaches to first person. At least two of these will be complete stories; others may be the beginning of a novel or novella or floating scenes. Students will confer several times with the instructor to discuss their work.

Instructor
Anelise Chen

WRIT UN3118  First Novels: How They Work

First Novels exist as a distinct category, in part, because all novelists must write one. They may never write a second, but in order to be called novelists there always has to be a first. As a result the first novel is a very special animal. Every kind of writer must attempt one and despite vast differences in genre or style there are often many similarities between them. In fact one of the surest similarities are the flaws in each book. Before each writer becomes expert at his or her method, his or her style, there is room for experimentation and unsuccessful attempts. These “failures” are often much more illuminating for students than the successes of later books. First novels contain the energy of youth, but often lack the precision that comes with maturity. By examining a series of first novels students will learn to identify common craft elements of first novels and how to employ them to great effect in their own writing.

Instructor
Victor LaValle

WRIT UN3125  Apocalypses Now

From ancient myths of the world’s destruction to cinematic works that envision a post-apocalyptic reality, zealots of all kinds have sought an understanding of “the end of the world as we know it.” But while apocalyptic predictions have, so far, failed to deliver a real glimpse of that end, in fiction they abound. In this course, we will explore the narrative mechanisms by which post-apocalyptic works create projections of our own world that are believably imperiled, realistically degraded, and designed to move us to feel differently and act differently within the world we inhabit. We will consider ways in which authors craft immersive storylines that maintain a vital allegorical relationship to the problems of the present, and discuss recent trends in contemporary post-apocalyptic fiction. How has the genre responded to our changing conception of peril? Is literary apocalyptic fiction effective as a vehicle for persuasion and for showing threats in a new light? Ultimately, we will inquire into the possibility of thinking beyond our present moment and, by doing so, altering our fate.

Instructor
Alexandra Kleeman
WRIT W3335 The Lyric Essay

While nonfiction is perhaps known for its allegiance to facts and logic in the stalwart essay form, the genre conducts its own experiments, often grouped under the term "lyric essays." Lyric essays are sometimes fragmentary, suggestive, meditative, inconclusive; they may glance only sidelong at their subject, employ the compression of poetry, and perform magic tricks in which stories slip down blind alleys, discursive arguments dissolve into ellipses, and narrators disappear altogether. Lyric essayists blend a passion for the actual with innovative forms, listening deeply to the demands of each new subject. In this course, students will map the terrain of the lyric essay, work in which writers revise nonfiction traditions such as: coherent narrative or rhetorical arcs; an identifiable, transparent, or stable narrator; and the familiar categories of memoir, personal essay, travel writing, and argument. Students will read work that challenges these familiar contours, including selections from Halls of Fame by John D'Agata, Don't Let Me Be Lonely by Claudia Rankine, Plainwater by Anne Carson, Letters to Wendy by Joe Wenderoth, The Body and One Love Affair by Jenny Bouly, Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, Running in the Family by Michael Ondaatje, Neck Deep and Other Predicaments by Ander Monson. They can expect to read essays selected from The Next American Essay edited by John D'Agata and In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, as well as essays by Paul Metcalf, David Foster Wallace, Sherman Alexie, Michael Martone, and Sei Shonagon. The course will be conducted seminar style, with close reading, lecture, and classroom discussion. The students will be expected to prepare a written study and comments for class on a particular book/author/issue. They will also complete writing exercises and their own lyric essay(s), one of which we will discuss as a class. Their final project will be a collection of their creative work accompanied by an essay discussing their choices.

Instructor
Sec 01

WRIT UN3214 Hybrid Nonfiction Forms

Creative nonfiction is a frustratingly vague term. How do we give it real literary meaning; examine its compositional aims and techniques, its achievements and especially its aspirations? This course will focus on works that we might call visionary – works that combine art forms, genres and styles in striking ways. Works in which image and text combine to create a third interactive language for the reader. Works still termed “fiction” “history” or “journalism” that join fact and fiction to interrogate their uses and implications. Certain memoirs that are deliberately anti-autobiographical, turning from personal narrative to the sounds, sight, impressions and ideas of the writer’s milieu. Certain essays that join personal reflection to arts and cultural criticism, drawing on research and imagination, the vernacular and the formal, even prose and poetry. The assemblage or collage that, created from notebook entries, lists, quotations, footnotes and indexes achieves its coherence through fragments and associations, found and original texts.

Instructor
Sec 01 Margo Jefferson

WRIT UN3216 Truth And Facts: Creative License In Nonfiction

As writers of literary nonfiction, we seek to articulate the truth about people, personal experiences, and events. But how do those pesky facts figure in? Demarcating the boundaries of reasonable artistic license is an ongoing debate between writers, editors, fact-checkers, and audiences. Can changing chronologies and identifying details help the writer arrive at a deeper truth about her subject? Or are the facts intractable? Where do we draw the line between fabrication and artistry? Is there any merit to what Werner Herzog deems “the ecstatic truth?” Do different rules apply for writing memoir versus writing reported essays and articles? How can we work responsibly with quotes while making dialogue readable? Just how experimental can we be while earning the mantle of nonfiction? In this class we will read works
that take different approaches at mining toward the truth and unpack various distinct points of view on the debate.

Our classes will consist mainly of discussion, with occasional in-class writing exercises and presentations. Students will write reflection papers on the assigned texts throughout the course and compose their own code of nonfiction ethics by the term’s end, and examine their own work under this rubric.

*Instructor*
Sec 01  Elizabeth Greenwood

**WRIT UN3313  The Crisis of the “I”**

“Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” So wrote Yeats in 1919, in the shadow of the “Great” War. As the individual mind found less and less recourse to “traditional” systems of belief and narratives of meaning, poetry in the twentieth century began to bear witness to a fracturing of the self, and this “anarchy” was reflected in both the content and the forms of “modern” poems. Through a close analysis of poems by a variety of authors, this course will investigate aesthetic strategies for representing such a fragmentation in perception and cognition, as well as the urgency of a moral dialectic in poems written in the wake of large-scale cultural traumas. We will also look at various aesthetic strategies for “recovering” from a disintegration of self, including deep-image poetics, repetition and incantation, new formalism, and narrative tensions in the lyric mode.

*Instructor*
Joseph Fasano

**WRIT UN3318  Contemporary Women Poets-- Origin & Inspiration**

This seminar will trace the generative, procedural, and formal relationships between contemporary female poets and their literary influences in order to steep students in both historical traditions and current innovations in the form. Each week students will read a full-length collection written by a contemporary poet alongside a representative selection of poems penned by an influential writer chosen by that poet. Students will begin to grasp the complex and varied traditions within contemporary poetry, to think critically about relationships between the texts, and to locate themselves and their developing aesthetics within that literary framework. What are the differences between inspiration and appropriation and how do we negotiate them in our own writing? Is this distinction even relevant in today's era of hypertext, sampling, reusing and remixing? How do we pay homage to our literary ancestors while simultaneously remaining formally inventive? Who are students' literary foremothers and patron saints and how do they sustain us throughout a lifetime of creative practice?

*Instructor*
Sec 01  Marni Ludwig

**WRIT UN3010  Short Prose Forms**

The prose poem and its siblings the short short story and the brief personal essay are the wild cards in the writer’s deck; their identities change according to the dealer. We will consider a wide range of forms, approaches, and styles, spanning centuries. In addition to works in English, we will read translations from the French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese. Seminar discussions will be complemented by frequent writing exercises (inside and outside of class) and some abbreviated workshopping of student pieces. Each student will make one brief classroom presentation.

*Instructor*
Sec 01  Alan Ziegler
WRIT UN3013  Process Writing & Writing Process

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, focusing 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.

Instructor
Anaïs Duplan

WRIT UN3011 Translation Seminar: Introduction to Theories & Practice

*No prior knowledge of foreign language required but highly encouraged.*

This course is designed to introduce students to the art of literary translation and to encourage them to investigate ways in which translation can impact them as readers and writers. Together we will explore broad-ranging questions pertaining to the linguistic, cultural, and socio-political significance of translation while analyzing the various challenges confronted by the art’s foremost practitioners. This course will pose questions about the role of the translator and what it means to interpret, capture, and transmit meaning from one language to another. We will read and discuss texts by writers and theorists alike, including works by Benjamin, Derrida, Borges, Steiner, Nabokov, Schleiermacher, Goethe, Spivak, Jakobson, Venuti, Bernofsky, and Murakami, as well as essays by various contemporary translators as a way of exposing ourselves to a range of perspectives on translation. We will also read comparatively multiple translations of a single text. As readers and practitioners of translation, we will train our ears to detect the visibility or invisibility of the translator’s craft. Through short writing experiments, we will discover how to identify and capture the nuances that traverse literary styles, historical periods and cultures. We will also discuss the recent upsurge in the publishing industry's interest in literature in translation and what this may say about our current literary epoch. The course will culminate in a final project to be developed with the instructor that may be a critical analysis, an original translation accompanied by a translator's note of introduction, or a creative project applying “translation thinking” to other art forms.

Instructor
Elianna Kan

WRIT UN3215 Learning to See: Writing the Visual

It was through seriously meditating on the paintings and sculptures of Cezanne and Rodin that Rilke learned to see, as he phrased it, and radicalized his literary vision. In this seminar, we will look seriously at the object, and think through the forms, processes, and lives of artists as model and inspiration for our own pieces. The writers we will be reading play with genre, style, form, and voice in innovative ways, like the art and artists they are writing to, occasionally using images in their texts or turning their own books and essays into art objects and playful experiments. An indefinite list of these writers: W.G. Sebald, Claudia Rankine, Janet Malcolm, Douglas Martin, Roland Barthes, Hervé Guibert, Anne Carson, Sophie Calle, T. Fleischmann, Chris Kraus, Tisa Bryant, Bruce Hainley, Susan Sontag, Bhanu Kapil, Lisa Robertson, Ariana Reines, Wayne Koestenbaum, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and others. The class aims to stimulate and inspire your own practice, through reading and seeing, critically and ecstatically. You will be writing midterm and final critical responses, as well as submitting creative texts every week that respond to the reading culminating in a final literary work that will be an extension of one of your shorter imitative pieces.

Instructor
Sec 01  Kate Zambreno