COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS | WRITING

SPRING 2019 Coursebook

Workshops  Seminars  Lectures  Master Classes

Updated: February 13, 2019
# Table of Contents

## LIST OF COURSES BY DAY AND TIME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshops</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Classes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Course Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translations Workshops</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid Forms Lab</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Classes</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Projects Workshop</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKSHOPS

FICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Lynn Steger Strong  
Tue., 10am-1pm

Charles Bock  
Tue., 12:05pm-3:05pm

Paul La Farge  
Tue., 5:15pm-8:15pm

Eli Gottlieb  
Wed., 12:35pm-3:35pm

Gary Shteyngart  
Wed., 3:40pm-6:40pm

Anelise Chen  
Fri., 10am-1pm

FICTION – THESIS (9 points) *

Sam Lipsyte  
Mon., 12:05pm-3:05pm

Joshua Furst  
Mon., 3:10pm-6:10pm

Rivka Galchen  
Mon., 3:10pm-6:10pm

Ben Marcus  
Tue., 1:05pm-4:05pm

Binnie Kirshenbaum  
Wed., 3:40pm-6:40pm

Paul Beatty  
Thu., 1:05pm-4:05pm

Elissa Schappell  
Thu., 1:35pm-4:35pm

Ben Metcalf  
Thu., 4:40pm-7:40pm

NONFICTION – OPEN (6 points)

Leslie Jamison  
Mon., 10am-1pm

Morgan Jerkins  
Mon., 10am-1pm

Phillip Lopate  
Mon., 1:05pm-4:05pm

Lis Harris  
Tue., 1:05pm-4:05pm

Richard Locke  
Tue., 2:10pm-5:10pm

Michael Greenberg  
Tue., 4:15pm-7:15pm

Meghan Daum  
Wed., 12:35pm-3:35pm

Mitchell Jackson  
Thu., 10am-1pm

POETRY – OPEN (6 points)

Lynn Melnick  
Mon., 12:05pm-3:05pm

Major Jackson  
Tue., 10am-1pm

Mark Bibbins  
Fri., 1:10pm-4:10pm

POETRY – THESIS (9 points) *

Alan Gilbert  
Tue., 4:30pm-7:30pm

Dorothea Lasky  
Tue., 4:30pm-7:30pm

Timothy Donnelly  
Thu., 4:10pm-7:10pm

Shane McCrae  
Thu., 10am-1pm

*Second-Years only
SEMINARS

—MONDAY—

Rob Spillman (FI)
Establishing Authority
Mon., 12:05pm-2:05pm

Brenda Wineapple (NF)
Explorations: The Art and Craft of Nonfiction Research
Mon., 1:05pm-3:05pm

Ruth Franklin (NF)
The Writer as Critic, the Critic as Writer
Mon., 2:10pm-4:10pm

Alan Gilbert (PO)
Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry
Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

Erroll McDonald (FI)
The Peripheral Writer
Mon., 4:10pm-6:10pm

Lincoln Michel (FI)
Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing Speculative Fiction
Mon., 6:15pm-8:15pm

—TUESDAY—

Monica Ferrell (CG)
The Art of Lying: A Cross-Genre Workshop in Fiction
Tue., 10am-12pm

Lis Harris (NF)
Profiles
Tue., 10am-12pm

Leanne Shapton (HFL)
Words and Pictures: Images, Series, and Caption Writing
Tue., 10am-12pm

Phillip Lopate (NF)
The Golden Age of the American Essay
Tue., 12:05pm-2:05pm

Wendy Xu (PO)
Self Meets World
Tue., 12:05pm-4:10pm

Joshua Furst (FI)
The Novella
Tue., 3:10pm-5:10pm

Gary Shteyngart (FI)
The Hysterical Male
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

(FI) = Fiction (NF) = Nonfiction (PO) = Poetry
(CG) = Cross-Genre (TR) = Translation
(HFL) = Hybrid Forms Lab

Seminars, translation workshops, and the hybrid forms lab are 3 points.
SEMINARS (cont’d.)

—WEDNESDAY—

Mike Harvkey (FI)
The Mechanics of Tone
  Wed., 10am-12pm

Deborah Paredez (PO)
Formally Yours: Experiments in Form and Formalism in Contemporary American Poetry
  Wed., 10am-12pm

Lara Vapnyar (FI)
Architecture of a Story
  Wed., 10:30am-12:30pm

Margo Jefferson (NF)
Cultural Memoir
  Wed., 10:30am-12:30pm

Johanna Lane (FI)
Postnationalist Literature
  Wed., 11am-1pm

Gabe Hudson (FI)
Weird Fiction as Political Tool
  Wed., 12:05pm-2:05pm

Katrina Dodson (CG, TR)
Literary Translation Workshop
  Wed., 1:05pm-3:35pm

Lee Siegel (FI)
The Picaresque Novel, Then and Now
  Wed., 1:05pm-3:05pm

Sheila Kohler (FI)
How People Change: The Stages of Life Seen Through the Eyes of the Great Short Story Writers
  Wed., 2:10pm-4:10pm

Matvei Yankelevich (CG)
The New Art of Making Books
  Wed., 3:40pm-6:10pm

Elissa Schappell (CG)
The Literary Magazine
  Wed., 4:15pm-6:15pm
SEMINARS (cont’d.)

THURSDAY

**Alan Ziegler (CG)**
The Writer as Teacher  
*Thu., 10:45am-1:45pm*

**Susan Bernofsky (CG, TR)**
Word for Word Workshop  
*Thu., 11am-1:30pm*

**Rachel Sherman (FI)**
The Mother Reflected in Literature  
*Thu., 1:05pm-3:05pm*

**B.K. Fischer (CG)**
Comma Sutra:  
Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis  
*Thu., 3:10pm-5:10pm*

**Christine Schutt (FI)**
In So Few Words:  
The Worlds of Flash Fiction  
*Thu., 3:10pm-5:10pm*

**Hilton Als (NF)**
Writing Real, Writing Feminist  
*Thu., 4:30pm-6:30pm*

FRIDAY

**Katrine Øgaard Jensen (CG, TR)**
Literary Translation Workshop  
*Fri., 10am-12:30pm*

**Shane McCrae (PO)**
The Speaking World: Contemporary Non-North American English-Language Poetry  
*Fri., 10am-12pm*

**James Cañón (FI)**
Speak the Speech: Writing Good Dialogue  
*Fri., 1:10pm-3:10pm*
LECTURES

—MONDAY—

Alice Quinn
The Beauty and Power of the Sentence in Prose and Poetry
(3 points)
Mon., 6:35pm-8:35pm

—WEDNESDAY—

Benjamin Taylor
Quests and Questers
(3 points)
Wed., 4:10pm-6:10pm

—THURSDAY—

Richard Locke
Beyond Category: A Survey of Fiction
(3 points)
Thu., 2:10pm-4:10pm
MASTER CLASSES

——MONDAY——

David Hinton
The Wilds of Poetry: Adventures in Ancient China and Modern America (1.5 points)
Mon., 10am-12pm
Feb. 4 - Mar. 11

Nicole C. Kear
(Dis)ability in Memoir (1 point)
Mon., 10am-12pm
Feb. 25 - Mar. 25, no class Mar. 18

Keri Bertino
Teaching Academic Writing (1.5 points)
Mon., 10am-12pm
Apr. 1 - May 6

Madhu Kaza
Kitchen Table Translation: Cross-Language Experiments for Writers (1.5 points)
Mon., 3:30pm-5:30pm
Mar. 25 - Apr. 29

Corinna Barsan
Revise Like an Editor (1.5 points)
Mon., 6:15pm-8:15pm
Feb. 25 - Mar. 25, no class Mar. 18

Kristen Radtke
Graphic Narratives (1 point)
Mon., 6:15pm-8:15pm
Feb. 25 - Mar. 25, no class Mar. 18

——TUESDAY——

Richard Howard
The Richard Howard Hours (1.5 points)
Tue., 4:10pm-6:10pm
I. Feb. 5 - Mar. 12
II. Mar. 26 - Apr. 30

Lauren Grodstein
Dialogue (1.5 points)
Tue., 5:10pm-7:10pm
Feb. 5 - Mar. 12

Nicholas Delbanco
Strategies in Prose (1 point)
Tue., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Jan. 22 - Feb. 12

William Wadsworth
Committed to Memory (1.5 points)
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Feb. 5 - Mar. 5

Ira Silverberg
The Beats at Columbia (1.5 points)
Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm
Mar. 26 - Apr. 30

Saïd Sayrafiezadeh
Running for Your Life: Memoir Writing in 1000 Words or Less (1.5 points)
Tue., 7:20pm-9:20pm
Feb. 5 - Mar. 12

——THURSDAY——

Maria Venegas
The Art of Revision
Thu., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Feb. 7 to Mar. 14

Daphne Merkin
The Language of Eros
Thu., 5:15pm-7:15pm
Mar. 28 to May 2

Jia Tolentino
How to Sound Like Yourself (1 point)
Thu., 6:40pm-8:40pm
Apr. 11 - May 2

——FRIDAY——

CAConrad
Occult Poetics & (Soma)tic Poetry Rituals (1.5 points)
Fri., 10am-12pm
Jan. 25 - Mar. 1

Nalini Jones
A Touch of Genius: Writing Back to the Canon (1.5 points)
Fri., 12:05pm-2:05pm
Feb. 8 - Mar. 15

Katy Lederer
Writing Climate Change (1.5 points)
Fri., 2:10pm-4:10pm
Jan. 25 - Mar. 8, no class Feb. 15

Ru Freeman
Writing in Hard Times (1.5 points)
Fri., 2:10pm-4:10pm
Mar. 29 - May 3

Amy Grace Loyd
The Editing Cycle (1.5 points)
Fri., 2:10pm-4:10pm
Mar. 29 - May 3
When Simone du Beauvoir published her seminal *The Second Sex* in 1949, she helped open the door to a new way of feminist thinking—one that was grounded in historical research, personal experience, and reporting. Thirty or so years after that groundbreaking work first appeared, a number of extraordinary women writers and thinkers went on to produce work that explores and criticizes, celebrates and denounces, the very idea of being feminist, or womanist, authors. In this course we will read and discuss parts of *The Second Sex*, before concentrating on the extraordinary essays, autobiographies, and essay-inspired fiction that writers ranging from Hannah Arendt, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Ntozake Shange, Angela Davis and Kate Millett to Elizabeth Hardwick, Jean Rhys, Paule Marshall, Renata Adler, Jamaica Kincaid, Susan Sontag, and Fran Ross produced during the nineteen-seventies and eighties—a period commonly referred to as “second wave feminism.” The writers read should inspire without necessarily influencing your own essays about the politics of being.

We will be reading works, and excerpts, by authors such as Zora Neale Hurston, J.D. Salinger, Clarice Lispector, Langston Hughes, Nathalie Sarraute, Italo Calvino, Samanta Schweblin, Donald Barthelme, Manuel Puig, Shirley Jackson, Richard Price, Iris Murdoch and Henry Green, among others. There will be in-class dialogue-writing exercises. The last quarter of the semester will be reserved for workshopping.

James Cañón

**Speak the Speech: Writing Good Dialogue**

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

The reason most writers have difficulty writing good dialogue is because what they’re really trying to write is not dialogue, but simply talk. Dialogue is speech appropriate for the story, verbal communication that works with and for, not against, the fiction. In this seminar (with a workshop component), we’re going to read and discuss fiction comprised primarily out of dialogue, or with a focus on how people talk. We’re also going to examine examples, formats, and a set of specific techniques to write dialogue that sets the scene, characterizes, advances the plot, and provides exposition in an engaging, masked way.

There will be in-class dialogue-writing exercises. The last quarter of the semester will be reserved for workshopping.
Monica Ferrell

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

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, Carmen Machado, Denis Johnson, Clarice Lispector, 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.

*This course is open to Nonfiction and Poetry students only.*

B.K. Fischer

**The Comma Sutra: Grammar, Syntax, and Praxis**  
(CROSS-GENRE)  
Thu., 3:10pm-5:10pm

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 laws 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 practices in poetry and prose, including patterns of syntax, parataxis and hypotaxis, the subjunctive, deixis and subjectivity, voice, vernaculars, rhythm, pitch, and tempo. Our analysis of grammar will dovetail with theoretical perspectives beyond subject and predicate, drawing insights from ethics, feminist linguistics, gaze theory, racial politics and aesthetics, and media studies. We will dissect and revel in sentences by Cornelius Eady, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Marilynne Robinson, Emily Dickinson, Lydia Davis, William Carlos Williams, Richard Howard, Jorie Graham, Claudia Rankine, Taiye Selasi, and Vampire Weekend among other examples, and read essays by Nietzsche, 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 elements, and a final paper of approximately five pages. The course also includes editorial support for your own sentences—during class and in conferences—as well as
ongoing “sentence labs” that will help you refine and develop the grammatical and syntactic strategies in your own work.

**Ruth Franklin**

**The Writer as Critic, the Critic as Writer**

(NONFICTION)  
Mon., 2:10pm-4:10pm

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 Susan Sontag, Pauline Kael, Greil Marcus, Janet Malcolm, Zadie Smith, Hilton Als, Jenny Zhang, and others.

**Joshua Furst**

**The Novella**

(FICTION)  
Tue., 3:10pm-5:10pm

In an essay a few years ago in the *New Yorker*, Ian McEwan called the novella “the perfect form of prose fiction.” He wasn’t the first to make this claim.

A good novella requires the rigor and control—the polished beauty—of a short story while demanding the scope of vision and breadth of narrative—the complexity and depth—of a novel. The writer can’t hide clunky sentences and extraneous descriptions in its bulk. He can’t rely on the glitter of his style to carry the reader past the faults in his narrative. For the student of fiction, studying novellas allows for both close reading and a manageable examination of the variety of narrative tactics available to writers looking to move beyond the short story form.

In this class, we’ll analyze a range of novellas, chosen for their formal and stylistic variety, and attempt to discern how they achieve their effects. Students will write the first ten pages of a novella and outline a plan for its completion.
Readings may include Leo Tolstoy, Herman Melville, Carson McCullers, Juan Rulfo, Marguerite Duras, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Denis Johnson, etc.

**Alan Gilbert**

**Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Poetry**

(POETRY) Mon., 4:15pm-6:15pm

This class will focus on the history of twentieth-century avant-garde poetry. We will begin briefly in the nineteenth century with Charles Baudelaire, Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Lautréamont, Stéphane Mallarmé, and then examine various avant-garde, experimental, and non-mainstream poetry movements, including Symbolism, Imagism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Harlem Renaissance, Négritude, Black Arts Movement, Black Mountain School, Beats, New York School, Objectivism, feminist poetry, cross-cultural poetics, ethnopoetics, spoken word poetry, hip-hop, Language poetry, concrete poetry, and more. We will end by focusing on recent trends such as Flarf, Conceptual writing, and digital poetry. Along the way, we will pause to talk more extensively about important figures in this history such as Gertrude Stein, Charles Olson, Adrienne Rich, Amiri Baraka, John Ashbery, and others, as well as read the work of a few younger writers. We will also occasionally reference parallel developments in twentieth-century avant-garde art, theater, and music. The writing requirement is a 12–15-page creative portfolio or a critical paper of equal length.

**Edith Grossman**

**Writers You Should Know More About**

(CROSS-GENRE, TRANSLATION) Tue., 2:10pm-4:10pm

These six authors, from Colombia (Mutis), Cuba (Montero; Alberto), Guatemala (Monterroso), Peru (Roncagliolo), and Spain (Ríos), all expatriates, are well known and highly respected in many parts of the world, but not in the United States. The aim of this course is to introduce you to representative works in the hope that you will continue to explore their writing. Eight of the books are novellas; one is a collection of short stories; three are novels.

There are three required papers, three pages each. Late papers are not accepted. As you know, attendance is mandatory. Active participation in class discussions is expected.

**Week 1:** Introduction
**Week 2:** Álvaro Mutis, *The Snow of the Admiral*
**Week 3:** Mayra Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness*
**Week 4:** Julián Ríos, *Loves That Bind*
**Week 5:** Álvaro Mutis, *Ilona Comes With the Rain*

**First paper due**
**Week 6:** Mayra Montero, *Dancing to Almendra*
Week 7: Augusto Monterroso, *Complete Works and Other Stories*
Week 8: Eliseo Alberto, *Caracol Beach*
Week 9: Mayra Montero, *The Messenger*

**Second paper due**
Week 10: Álvaro Mutis, *Un bel morir*
Week 11: Santiago Roncagliolo, *Red April*
Week 12: Mayra Montero, *The Red of His Shadow*
Week 13: Álvaro Mutis, *The Tramp Steamer's Last Port of Call*

**Third paper due**
Week 14: Conclusions

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**Lis Harris**

**Profiles**

(NONFICTION) 
Tue., 10am-12pm

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.

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**Mike Harvkey**

**The Mechanics of Tone**

(FICTION) 
Wed., 10am-12pm

Tone is mercurial. It’s a murky mode of expression, a slippery space where language becomes dynamic and suspicious. Tone can set the mood, or ruin it. Tone can get you into trouble, or out of it. In literature, tone may be the feeling that lingers longest in the reader's consciousness, as well as the most difficult formal aspect to locate and define. Where does tone originate? Does it come from a single element, or a constellation? What’s the difference between tone and voice? What are the tonal advantages and limitations of first-, third-, and second-person perspectives? Does every story even have what could be called a tone? Is there a common tone to certain genres? While tone is a crucial aspect of a storytelling, it remains the form's most beguiling element. In this seminar, we will make a valiant attempt to find, understand, and maybe even control tone.
We will examine several short stories and a handful of novels. We’ll also listen to a little music. We will undertake occasional in-class writing exercises, with a workshop component. Though tone will be the primary locus of our inquiry, all aspects of the form will be open for discussion. Students should be intimately familiar with each text before each class so that we have a lively and sustained discussion.

We will read work from a range of authors like Edward P. Jones, Richard Yates, Bohumil Hrabal, Joan Didion, David Means, Joy Williams, James Salter, Yōko Ogawa, J.M. Coetzee, Susan Steinberg, Richard Millhauser, Jamaica Kincaid, Dan Chaon, Bonnie Jo Campbell, Tobias Wolff, Rachel Cusk, Raymond Carver, Ursula K. Le Guin, Magnus Mills, and Philip Hensher.

Gabe Hudson

**Weird Fiction as Political Tool**

(FICTION) Wed., 12:05pm-2:05pm

Chatbots spewing hate speech, refugee children kept in cages, African-Americans 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

**Cultural Memoir**

(NONFICTION) Wed., 10:30am-12:30pm

We will look at works that explore the spaces between what we call the personal and what we call the cultural, the social, the geographical, the political. How do we examine ourselves through historical movements and art forms, through landscapes and artifacts, through ephemera? How do we probe the relations—acute, subtle, intricate—between our private and public selves; find language that captures their complexities? The syllabus will include memoirs, essays, experimental criticism and even some fiction.
Sheila Kohler

How People Change: The Stages of Life Seen Through the Eyes of the Great Short Story Writers

(FICTION) Wed., 2:10pm-4:10pm

We will examine pivotal moments in the life cycle looking at childhood, adolescence, courtship and marriage, work and maturity, and finally death portrayed in outstanding short stories and one novella. We’ll attempt to discover how this change is conveyed so convincingly and compellingly, to delineate the nature of the conflict at each stage of life, and how much of the change comes from without and within, and what the story has to tell us about the essence of each time of life. We’ll look closely at how every element in the story builds into something unique and yet universal. Possible readings would include Chekhov’s “Grisha” and D.H. Lawrence’s “Rocking Horse Winner” for childhood; Katherine Mansfield’s “Her First Ball” for adolescence; Delmore Schwartz’s “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities” for courtship; Albert Camus’s “Adulterous Woman” for marriage; Chekhov’s “Gooseberries” for maturity and Jean Rhys’s “Sleep It Off, Lady” for death and perhaps Tolstoy’s “Death of Ivan Ilytch.”

Johanna Lane

Postnationalist Literature

(FICTION) Wed., 11am-1pm

Unlike writers of the past who, more often than not, rooted themselves and their work in the culture into which they were born, many contemporary fiction-writers are sidestepping or rejecting the confines of nationality. In “Postnationalist Literature,” we will explore these questions (and more): How has globalization affected fiction? What have postnationalism and postcolonialism got to do with each other? How does postnationalism differ from cultural appropriation? Do utopian and dystopian novels belong under the postnationalist umbrella? Is there a natural intersection between autofiction and postnationalism? This will all be in the service of considering how throwing off the burden of where we’re from might widen the options available to us as writers of fiction.

The final assignment will be creative and workshopped.

Readings will alternate between short stories and novels. The list may include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Kevin Barry, Amit Chaudhuri, J.M. Coetzee, Rachel Cusk, Kazuo Ishiguro, Chang-Rae Lee, and Dinaw Mengestu.
In the postwar era, from 1945 to let us say 1975, America found itself a dominant imperial power. Coincidentally or not, at the same time there was spawned a remarkable flowering of nonfiction prose—self-aware, analytical, skeptical, questioning—as American writers of every stripe addressed themselves to the promises and stresses of the historical moment. The influence of European emigre intellectuals like Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno and Nicola Chiaromonte forced homegrown writers to up their mental game. Many self-described novelists (Susan Sontag, James Baldwin, Joan Didion, Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal) did some of their best work as essayists. In every art form, powerful critical voices arose: visual arts (Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, Harold Rosenberg), film (Pauline Kael, Manny Farber, Andrew Sarris), dance (Edwin Denby, Arlene Croce), music (Virgil Thomson, Lester Bangs, Ellen Willis), literature (Elizabeth Hardwick, Lionel Trilling, Irving Howe, W. H. Auden). Cold War politics (Richard Hofstadter, George F. Kennan, Martin Luther King, Jr.), religion (Paul Tillich), education (Paul Goodman), the environment (Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, John McPhee, Annie Dillard), race and gender (Baldwin, Albert Murray, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Florence King) all inspired essays. Meanwhile, brash stylistic breakthroughs derived from the Beats and the New Journalism (Tom Wolfe, Seymour Krim, Hunter Thompson, Nora Ephron) challenged assumptions about “proper” essay tone.

What is English-language poetry? One of the few answers one can confidently give to that question is: English-language poetry is a world poetry. But poets and students of poetry in America often only encounter a narrow slice of it. In this class, we will engage with a wide slice of contemporary English-language poetry. We will read poets from Africa, Australia, the Caribbean, the U.K., and other English-speaking parts of the world that are not North America. Most of what we do over the course of the semester, we will do during class discussion, but you will also write one five-page essay in response to one of the texts we read in class. Very broadly speaking, most of us have applied a single music to our poetry, though each of us has probably heard that music differently. We will hear new musics applied to English in this class, and we will learn, as well as we can, the new musics we hear.
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)
- *Ferdydurke*, 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)
- *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.
Lincoln Michel

**Architecture of the Unreal: Constructing Speculative Fiction**

(FICTION)  
Mon., 6:15pm-8:15pm

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.

Deborah Paredez

**Formally Yours: Experiments in Form and Formalism in Contemporary American Poetry**

(POETRY)  
Wed., 10am-12pm

From Marilyn Hacker’s lesbian sonnets to the Afro-formalist invention of the bop, a wide array of American poets are engaging with and encouraging radical reconsiderations of received forms. How and why are poets—particularly from historically underrepresented communities—turning to and reimagining form and formalism? What exactly does (neo)formalism mean in recent years and who are the poets who are shaping this terrain? How have the formal experimentations by Black, queer, feminist, and other poets of color transformed and transgressed the borders of American poetry? Each week during the first two months of the semester we will study and produce a selection of contemporary poetic experiments with a particular received, traditional, newly invented, or ghost form such as sonnets, sestinas, villanelles, triolets, blues, and prose poems. We will spend the last month of the semester studying collections by contemporary poets who deploy a variety of received and new forms. What do these forms and their rules, restrictions, and reconfigurations make possible for both the poets we study and for our own practice?

NOTE: Although this course focuses primarily on poetry, the genre-defying nature of several of the poetic experimentations we will study, along with visits from artists from other disciplines who engage or challenge ideas of form, will encourage cross-genre conversations and considerations throughout the semester. All are welcome, but FIRST-YEAR POETS will be given priority in this seminar and are very strongly encouraged to enroll in it.
Elissa Schappell

**The Literary Magazine**

(CROSS-GENRE) Wed., 4:15pm-6:15pm

The literary magazine form has, for centuries, provided the restless visionary editor with a platform to promote the work of writers and artists they most believe in and hustle their creative agenda. In this seminar we will look at the past, present, and future of literary magazines, from the perspective of both editor and author. We will study those literary journals and editors most instrumental in creating the American literary landscape, including *The Evergreen Review, The Paris Review,* and *Callaloo,* as well as those magazines, such as *A Public Space, One Story,* and *NOON,* shaping the culture today. We will consider all the elements that make a literary magazine distinctive, such as point of view and layout and design, and the editorial processes leading to publication. Class assignments will include: researching literary journals, editing exercises, creating run sheets, and curating artwork. By the end of the semester, students will have invented a literary magazine that reflects their unique sensibilities. Class will include special guests and a field trip.

Christine Schutt

**In So Few Words: The Worlds of Flash Fiction**

(FICTION) Thu., 3:10pm-5:10pm

Readings of short, short fiction and *how it is made large enough to signify.* What to seek and what to avoid in the writing of short, short fiction with consideration of many of its best practitioners: Jayne Anne Phillips, Barry Hannah, Amy Hempel, Etgar Keret, Diane Williams, Ottessa Moshfegh, Kathryn Scanlan, Stuart Dybek, Mark Strand, Lydia Davis. Reading will include short essays by Deb Olin Unferth, Stuart Dybek, Julio Ortega and others on the form’s history and often asked questions: Is it poetry or prose, and how to begin and find feeling and freedom in under a page? Weekly writing assignments modeled on that day’s reading will be made and collected the following week. Last class to include short, short stories any student in class wishes to share.

Rachel Sherman

**The Mother Reflected in Literature**

(FICTION) Thu., 1:05pm-3:05pm

In this course we will read fiction focused on mothers who face the challenge of reconciling who they are to and with their children, with who they are in the world and to themselves. We will explore how writers use the power of the mother/child relationship to both challenge and acknowledge the readers’ previous notions, and we will analyze why the “bad mother” is
such a strong and frequent literary subject. We will look at the different ways in which motherhood is portrayed, and how literature reflects the forever changing ideas about what a mother should and shouldn’t be. Readings will include fiction by various writers who are exploring the mother in innovative ways. The assignments will consist of weekly creative writing prompts and one final essay.

Gary Shteyngart

**The Hysterical Male**

(FICTION)  
Tue., 4:15pm-6:15pm

The 20th century has been a complete disaster and the 21st century will likely be much worse. In response, U.S. and British male novelists have been howling angrily for quite some time about the decline of our species and their own supposedly endangered privileges. This course will examine some of the results, from Roth’s Portnoy and Bellow’s Herzog to Martin Amis’s John Self, taking side trips into the unreliable insanity of Nabokov’s Charles Kinbote and ending with Andrew Sean Greer’s recent novel *Less*. What gives vitality to the male hysterical hero? How should humor be balanced with pathos? Why are so many protagonists (and authors) of Jewish or Anglo extraction? How have early male hysterics given rise to the “hysterical realism” as outlined by critic James Wood? Is the shouting, sweaty male the perfect representation of our disastrous times, or is it time for him to shut up already? How does the change from early to late hysterical novels reflect our progress from an entirely male-dominated world to a mostly male-dominated one? Do we still need to be reading this stuff?

Lee Siegel

**The Picaresque Novel, Then and Now**

(FICTION)  
Wed., 1:05pm-3:05pm

The traditional picaresque novel consists of a protagonist who passes through a series of episodes, or adventures, that expose the nature of his or her society, as well as the social and psychological nature of the people he or she encounters. Originating in Spain in the 16th century, the picaresque style has become a dominant mode of cultural expression—from fiction, to memoir, to our episodic posting on social media. In this class we will study how various writers use the picaresque figure as a delicate probing instrument to anatomize and expose the encircling world. We will talk about how these writers invented ways to wind action into psychology, and to fuse investigations of human psychology with explorations of how society works. How, in other words, did they tell stories that are, at the same time, intensely individualistic and intensely social? Jean-Paul Sartre once said that the fundamental dilemma facing writers is that you cannot reflect on an event and live through it at the same time. The picaresque style presents heroes who, straddling the private and the public, and with a little help from their creators, attempt to do exactly that.
Rob Spillman

Establishing Authority

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

From the first sentence, we know if we are in confident, capable hands. The best writers establish authority immediately. By authority I mean that there is a clear sense of control, and that this confidence is earned with particular language, tone, detail, cadence, and, most importantly, by creating urgency, a simple question of “why should I keep reading?”

Take the opening of Jim Shepard’s story “Boys Town”: “Here’s the story of my life: whatever I did wasn’t good enough, anything I figured out I figured out too late, and whenever I tried to help I made things worse.” Immediately we realize that this is a masterful writer using words as a weapon, that each word is placed exactly where it is intended, that the rhythms speak to a musicality that is in concert with the narrator and the action. We are propelled sentence to sentence by this musicality and we want to know more about the narrator and why he considers himself such a fatalistic mess.

No matter the form or genre; first, second, or third person; past or present; speculative or hyper-realistic; fiction, poetry, or nonfiction; establishing authority is the first and most important task of the writer. We will look at numerous first pages across forms, including work from Karen Russell, Jesmyn Ward, Joe Wenderoth, Lydia Davis, and dozens more. We’ll also take a close look at the entirety of Robert Stone’s story “Helping,” paying attention to how Stone’s strong beginning establishes authority and how every detail of this passage pays off throughout the story.

We will look at mostly successful and some unsuccessful openings, and analyze how the author has or hasn’t firmly captivated the reader.

The seminar will include workshopping openings from students, close reading of openings across genres and forms, exercises, and revisions. With the close readings, we will subject the texts to the same cold reading standard I have at Tin House, where we receive upwards of 20,000 submissions a year. Homework will also include students bringing in successful openings, from the famous to the newly discovered.

Lara Vapnyar

Architecture of a Story

Wed., 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.

Brenda Wineapple

**Explorations: The Art and Craft of Nonfiction Research**

(NONFICTION) Mon., 1:05pm-3:05pm

This is a hybrid seminar (seminar/workshop) that provides an introduction to research methods for those nonfiction, fiction, and poetry students who incorporate historical, documentary, or other primary and secondary materials into their work. We will therefore 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. We begin with an overview of method and technique, answering how we determine 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. To do this, we will read various authors who encounter just these issues. And then we will apply these means and methods to our own work, which we will discuss in terms of the problems we have integrating research into narrative—as well as the solutions we’ve invented. That will be the “workshop” portion of the seminar.

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

Wendy Xu

**Self Meets World**

(POETRY) Tue., 12:05pm-2:05pm

This seminar will explore the generative possibilities of using poetry to document a historical moment and/or self, a personal psychology or pathology, and a process of thinking acted upon (and explicitly aware of) the forces of time. By broadening our definition of
documentary poetics to reach beyond the overtly “political,” we will locate ourselves in the collision between first-person experience and socio-historical reality. “Documentation” as an act will be considered as both a mode of inquiry and a methodology for the poet’s construction of creative work. How have poets used documentary methods to better understand their private and politicized selves, to dissent, to agitate the status quo? And to what literary ends do their experimental practices aspire? Students should be prepared to encounter hybrid forms and non-poetic texts in this course, ranging from transcripts to found-language to historical documents to visual rhetorics, in addition to producing weekly reading responses and occasional in-class writing. This seminar will be conducted as primarily a space for close-reading and discussion of assigned texts, with an emphasis on craft-driven and contextually aware reading practices. A short packet of original documentary pieces will also come together by semester’s end. Texts by Layli Long Soldier, Philip Metres, Don Mee Choi, Claudia Rankine, Srikanth Reddy, Liu Xía, Alice Oswald, Mark Nowak, and many others will be considered.

Matvei Yankelevich

The New Art of Making Books

(CROSS-GENRE) Wed., 3:40pm—6:10pm

In 1975, in a manifesto titled “The New Art of Making Books,” Ulises Carrión suggested that rather than making texts, “the writer makes books” and “assumes the responsibility for the whole process.” This course takes up that challenge, focusing on the book’s potential (and phenomenology) as an art object and—simultaneously—as a container of and vessel for literary texts. To that end, we will investigate both practical and theoretical aspects of the invention, design, and making of books, with special emphasis on issues of book structure, editorial practice, DIY production tactics, divergent histories, distribution strategies, and the social nature of the small press endeavor.

To provide context for our investigation and our own book-making endeavors, we will survey the history of the artist’s book, and the literary artist’s book in particular, beginning with the illustrated books of William Blake and William Morris, the livre d’artiste tradition, and the avant-garde book from Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay’s Prose of the Trans-Siberian to Russian Futurist pamphlets. Twentieth-century experimentation in literary form will also be considered, with particular focus on visual writing (from Bob Brown to Gabriel Pomerand and Letrisme), “asemic writing” (Henri Michaux, Mirtha Dermisache), typographic experimentation (Concrete Poetry), appropriation strategies (from Bern Porter’s Founds to Heimrad Bäcker’s documentary poetics), and the departure of the text from the book (Alan Kaprow’s happenings, Ian Hamilton Finlay’s poetry garden, Lev Rubinstein’s library cards).

The work of contemporary artists/writers (Johanna Drucker, Tom Phillips, Jen Bervin, David Abel), theorists of the artist’s book (Ulises Carrión, Simon Cutts, Clive Philpot), and literary artist’s book publishers (from Something Else Press to Coracle, Granary, and Siglio) will provide an important backdrop for our conversations and class projects. Topics of reading
and discussion will include: the democratization of art in the era of (and after) Ed Ruscha’s “democratic multiple”; DIY literary culture (zines, small presses, etc.); the role of the book-object in modern art practice; the sociality of little magazines and chapbook presses; the place of the book in the digital age.

Students will be given a grounding in book-making craft and assigned a variety of projects that involve both research and original writing, and the formulation of aesthetic vision and editorial practice. In addition to slide lectures, practicums, and discussions of the readings, we will use class time to invite guest speakers (writers, book artists, artist’s book publishers, book-arts collectives) and to take field trips to museums, libraries, and book-arts organizations.

Alan Ziegler

The Writer as Teacher

(CROSS-GENRE) Thu., 10:45am-1:45pm

This is a hybrid course: part seminar and part practicum. We will cover an overview of research into the writing process and the place 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 workshops; and 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 visits from exemplary practitioners of the art and craft of teaching. In the third hour, we will replicate classroom situations in small groups and individual presentations. (On any given class day, we may use none, some, or all of the third hour.) A wide variety of reading material will be handed out. There will be several short, practical papers (including informal responses to the readings). Attendance and punctuality are essential, as is active participation in class discussions and groups.
Susan Bernofsky

Word for Word Workshop

Thu., 11am-1:30pm

The Word for Word workshop offers students the chance to engage in a project of mutual collaborative translation with a partner selected specifically for each student from a French, German, Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish language MFA program. (All participants must know one of these languages at the intermediate level or better.) Over the course of the semester, students will translate short works of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry by their partners while their own work is being translated in the opposite direction. Regular conversations between the partners about the work-in-progress will take place via email and/or video conferencing. Reading assignments and introductory exercises will prepare for and support this work, logs detailing the process of collaboration will be discussed in class, and multiple drafts of the translations will be workshopped. At the end of the semester, participants may compete for a limited number of travel grants to facilitate a visit to the partner’s home country.

Prior translation experience is not required, and students need not be pursuing the LTAC joint course of study. The workshop is designed to serve as an introduction to literary translation and to provide a framework for and coaching through the process of working with an exchange partner. Anyone interested in working in close collaboration with another writer and curious about the ways in which translating and being translated can enrich his or her own writing is encouraged to apply.

Exchange partners this year will come from one of the following institutions: University of Paris XIII (France); Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig (Germany); Scuola Holden, Turin (Italy); Instituto Vera Cruz (Brazil); and Universidad Diego Portales (Chile).

**Note: Enrollment in this course is by application only.** Students will be selected primarily on the basis of the quality of the writing sample they submit for faculty evaluation, with translation experience and skills a secondary consideration. Application instructions will be emailed by Clarence Coo.
Literary Translation Workshop

Katrina Dodson  Wed., 1:05pm-3:35pm
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.
Hybrid Forms Labs are courses offered every semester that encourage students to explore narrative techniques through non-writing mediums such as visual art, movement, and sound. These courses involve in-class creative exercises and will provide exposure to new software, new technologies, and new ways of telling stories.

Leanne Shapton

**Words and Pictures: Images, Series, and Caption Writing**

Tue., 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 lab 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 lab 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, critiqued, and discussed.

**Required Texts:**

- *All the Clothes of a Woman*, Hans Peter Feldmann
- *Here*, Richard McGuire
- *Women of Paris*, Nico Jesse, André Maurois
- *New Waves*, Takashi Homm
- *End of an Age*, Paul Graham
- *Sabrina*, Nick Drnaso
- *The Mushroom Collector*, Jason Fulford
- *Bloodhorses: Notes from a Sportswriter’s Son*, John Jeremiah Sullivan
- *Orphic Paris*, Henri Cole
Richard Locke

**Beyond Category: A Survey of Fiction**

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

A survey of stories and novels written since the 1880’s that demonstrate the energy, variety, strengths, and limitations of different kinds of literary fiction in ways that elude such familiar critical categories as realism, modernism, and postmodernism. Most of these works are marked by a spirited if often troubling interpenetration of private and public, past and present, and high and low rhetoric. Their forms and themes portray many different kinds of intense self-interrogation driven by narrative circumstances, and many exhibit the self-conscious play with literary conventions and genres that produces a fiction of artifice, anxiety, and artful dodging. These fourteen writers changed the form of fiction in ways that still matter. This is a selection of strong writers—not a canon.

- Anton Chekhov, selections from *Anton Chekhov’s Selected Stories*, ed. Cathy Popkin (Norton Critical)
- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Harcourt)
- Jorge Luis Borges, selections from *Collected Fictions* (Penguin)
- Samuel Beckett, selections from *The Complete Short Prose* (Grove)
- Flannery O’Connor, selections from *Collected Works* (Library of America)
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (Vintage)
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Vintage)
- Donald Barthelme, selections from *Sixty Stories* (Penguin)
- Grace Paley, selections from *The Collected Stories* (FSG)
- Marguerite Duras, *The Lover* (Harper)
- Gabriel García Márquez, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (Vintage)
- Ben Okri, selections from *Stars of the New Curfew* (Penguin)
The sentence is the anchor of most great writing. It can function as an engine of great
subtlety and power, surprise and delight with its progress and turns, and command respect
when constructed with deliberation and care. In this class, we will explore a wide range of
superlative writing—poems, essays, memoirs, fiction, and hybrid texts, too—proving how
everlessly absorbing it is to pay attention to sentences while reading.

The roster of guest writers whose writing we’ll explore along with work they admire by
others:

Monday, January 28th, Joan Acocella: Literary and dance critic, staff writer for The
New Yorker, author of Twenty-Eight Artists and Two Saints as well as Willa Cather & the
Politics of Criticism and a biography of the choreographer Mark Morris.

Monday, February 4th, Vijay Seshadri: Poet, essayist, critic, author of the
collections The Wild Kingdom (1996), The Long Meadow (2003), winner of the James
Laughlin Award, and 3 Sections (2013), winner of the Pulitzer Prize. He is also a
professor at Sarah Lawrence College.

Monday, February 11th, Wendy S. Walters: Essayist and poet, author of
Multiply/Divide: On the American Real and Surreal as well as two books of poems, Troy,
Michigan and Longer and Wait, More You Love Me. She is also a contributor to Bookforum
and Harper’s.

Monday, February 18th, Alice Quinn: Former fiction and poetry editor, The New
Currently Executive Director, Poetry Society of America. Editor of Edgar Allan Poe
& The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts and Fragments by Elizabeth Bishop.

Monday, February 25th, Dwight Garner: Literary Critic for The New York Times,
former senior editor at the New York Times Book Review and founding books editor at
Salon.Com.

Monday, March 4th, Alice Quinn.

Monday, March 11th, Emily Bernard: Essayist and biographer, author of Carl Van
Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance and the recent Black is the Body: Stories from My
Grandmother’s Time, My Mother’s Time, and Mine. She is also a professor at the University
of Vermont.
Monday, March 25th, Sigrid Nunez: Novelist and memoirist, author of seven novels including *A Feather on the Breath of God*, *The Last of Her Kind*, and *The Friend*, winner of the 2018 National Book Award. She is also the author of *Sempre Susan: A Memoir of Susan Sontag* and the winner of a Whiting Award and a Rome Prize.

Monday, April 1st, Jesse Browner: Novelist and memoirist, author of five novels, including *The Uncertain Hour* and *Everything Happens Today* and the memoir, *How Did I Get Here: Making Peace with the Road Not Taken*.

Monday, April 8th, Adriana Socoski, Violinist and poet, winner of Columbia University’s 2015 Bennett Poetry Prize, selected by Carl Phillips. She has presented solo and chamber music recitals throughout North America, Europe, China, and Tibet and is an emerging scholar of 19th- and 20th-century lyric poetry in English.

Monday, April 15th: Rachel Eisenadrath: Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Barnard College, author of the recent *Poetry in a World of Things*.

Monday, April 22nd, Atsuro Riley: Poet, author of *Romey's Order* (University of Chicago Press), winner of a Whiting Award, The Believer Award, the Kate Tufts Poetry Prize.

Monday, May 6th, Alice Quinn.

**Books:**

- *Twenty-Eight Artists & Two Saints* by Joan Acocella
- *3 Sections*, poems by Vijay Seshadri
- *Multiply/Divide: On the American Real and Surreal* by Wendy S. Walters
- *Black is the Body: Stories from My Grandmother’s Time, My Mother’s Time, and Mine* by Emily Bernard
- *The Friend*, a novel by Sigrid Nunez
- *The Uncertain Hour*, a novel by Jesse Browner
- *Romey’s Order*, poems by Atsuro Riley

**Quests and Questers**

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

Our readings span the various genres: memoir, diary, fiction, travel writing, reportage and oral history. Our itinerary includes India, Tibet, Vietnam, England, Italy, Ireland, France, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Nebraska, and Louisiana. Our theme is searchers condemned to quest for the hidden, the dangerous, the ineffable, the unconquerable. We read the following:

- **VOYAGES OUT:**
  - *A Passage to India* (E. M. Forster)
  - *The Snow Leopard* (Peter Matthiessen)
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL QUESTS:
Father and Son (Edmund Gosse)
My Father and Myself (J. R. Ackerley)
Black Boy (Richard Wright)
All the Strange Hours (Loren Eiseley)
A Chill in the Air: An Italian War Diary, 1939-1940 (Iris Origo)
The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Giorgio Bassani)
The War (Marguerite Duras)

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTS:
Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience (Gitta Sereny)
Dispatches (Michael Herr)
Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster (Svetlana Alexievitch)
Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right (Arlie Russell Hochschild)

CODA:
The Little Red Chairs (Edna O’Brien)

Students are asked to read Forster’s A Passage to India prior to the first class. One written assignment of about fifteen pages is required at the end of the term.
Corinna Barsan

**Revise Like an Editor**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 4 - Mar. 11  
Mon., 6:15pm-8:45pm

The revision process is one of the most important and challenging aspects of writing. In this six-week intensive master class, we will take an editor’s perspective on polishing your work. The class will be structured as a mini-workshop and we will devote most of our time to peer reading and critique with an emphasis on elements of developmental editing as well as line editing. Over the course of the semester, students will submit pages that have been previously workshopped and revised at least once. We will focus on refinement of style, structure, and content. Sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, we will sharpen your tools for revision. Strong editorial feedback will be shared to help each writer shape and strengthen the material. Additional light reading will be assigned for class discussion but mostly we will concentrate on student work.

Keri Bertino

**Teaching Academic Writing**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Apr. 1 - May 6  
Mon, 10am-12pm

This class introduces contexts, theories, and practices of teaching college-level writing, with an emphasis on serving diverse student populations. Primary topics include fundamentals of both general and writing pedagogy, assignment and course development, responding to student writing, and exploration of the institutional sites of undergraduate writing. We will take up questions of language and power, the overlaps (and disjunctions) between pedagogies of creative and academic writing, and professionalization in the context of labor conditions.

Regular reading, research and writing assignments—such as designing writing prompts, responding to sample student essays, and drafting/revising statements of teaching philosophy—will encourage participants to critically reflect on their teaching values and assemble materials that may be used in job applications.
CAConrad

Occult Poetics & (Soma)tic Poetry Rituals

6 classes (1.5 points) / Jan. 25 - Mar. 1 Fri., 10am-12pm

“CAConrad’s poems invite the reader to become an agent in a joint act of recovery, to step outside of passivity and propriety and to become susceptible to the illogical and the mysterious.”


A short survey of occult poets and practitioners of the past as well as those of us practicing currently around the world. We will also work with (Soma)tic poetry rituals, investigating moon cycles, tarot, crystal work, and ways to heal through poetry and ritual. We will also discuss the importance of keeping our creative skills sharpened and how to collaborate with artists from other disciplines beyond the idea and practice of ekphrastic poetry.

We will also collectively create personalized (Soma)tic poetry rituals for each participant. We will focus on writing in our lives just as they are, not so much making space for art but seeing how poetry is waiting inside what we already do to be able to live in this world. Seeing the creative viability in everything around us in the every day, wherever we are, that is where the real magic lives!

Nicholas Delbanco

Strategies in Prose

4 classes (1 point) / Jan. 22 - Feb. 12 Tue., 5:15pm-7:15pm

After our introductory session, this month-long course will deal, in three weekly segments, and in the following sequence, with these three novels:

- A FAREWELL TO ARMS, Ernest Hemingway
- TO THE LIGHTHOUSE, Virginia Woolf
- AS I LAY DYING, William Faulkner

What I want to focus on is craft, the craft of our three exemplars—which will imply a special way of reading them and delimited problems they pose. Instead of asking, what does Hemingway mean, we’ll talk of what means he deploys; instead of discussing Woolf as an incipient suicide, we’ll talk of Mrs. Ramsay’s death in a parenthesis. To attempt a comprehensive reading of any of these authors in a four-week span is foolish; to attempt to comprehend the way they marshal metaphor is possible, perhaps. We will do writing exercises in several styles. The article of faith on which this class is based is that imitation is not merely sincere flattery, but also a good way to grow.
Ru Freeman

Writing in Hard Times

6 classes (1.5 points) / Jan. 25 - Mar. 8  
Fri., 2:10pm-4:10pm  
(no class Feb. 15)

We discuss texts, do close-reading, analyze at the sentence level, but where does literature come from? Who is responsible for its creation, for choosing to bring it to the readership, and who reads which texts? What is the relationship between literature and society and how do we, in a time when it feels as though the world is at a precipice, play our own role as writers and readers in addressing this predicament? In this seminar we’ll read individual poems and essays closely within a set of questions about the moral and political position of literature—and intellectuals and readers—in different cultural contexts. We will re/examine our own function as writers within the broader socio-political context and create generative work based on our reading and discussion.

Readings:
* American Sonnets For My Past and Future Assassin,* by Terrance Hayes
* Sing, Unburied Sing,* by Jesmyn Ward
* The Underground Railroad,* by Colson Whitehead
* Grace,* by Natasha Deon
* It Occurs to Me That I Am American,* Jonathan Santofler, Ed. (Justin Torres, Mark Di Ionnò, James Hannaham, Lily King)
* Tales of Two Americas,* John Freeman, Ed. (Taiye Selasi, Nami Mun, Rebecca Solnit)

Lauren Grodstein

Dialogue

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 5 - Mar. 12  
Tue., 5:10pm-7:10pm

This master class investigates how writers use dialogue to deepen character, advance plot, illuminate timeline, enlarge setting, and generally create effective fiction and creative nonfiction. We’ll talk about writing across gender and writing realistic children’s language. We’ll also look at the different ways dialogue can signal a character’s class, race, age, education, location, and even ambition. Readings will include work by Barry Hannah, Jhumpa Lahiri, ZZ Packer, and Richard Yates, among others.
David Hinton

**The Wilds of Poetry:**

**Adventures in Ancient China and Modern America**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 4 - Mar. 11  Mon., 10am-12pm

It turns out the philosophical engine driving modern American poetry was invented in ancient China and migrated to America through a process of complex cultural translation, beginning with Ezra Pound early in the twentieth century. That may sound odd, considering how distant ancient Chinese culture and language are from us. This master class will explore that ancient cultural world—which will involve interesting meditations on the nature of language and translation (its limitations and possibilities)—and how it became so transformative for modern American poetry.

However distant it may seem, the ancient Chinese worldview also feels remarkably contemporary in our secular and scientific age. In this worldview, the Cosmos is a living and harmonious whole, constantly self-generating (and so, female in nature), and human consciousness is an integral part of that whole. First, we will try to stretch our minds into this other mode of thought/experience and the classical Chinese language that represents it. Then we will read a range of classical Chinese poetry shaped by that worldview (in translation)—a poetry that can only be called ecopoetic, for it articulates consciousness as an integral part of landscape/Cosmos. We will consider different translation methods used by major American poets (Pound, Williams, Rexroth, Snyder), and how those methods helped construct the differing literary sensibilities of the poets. From there, we will expand our gaze to look at the process of deep cultural translation/transmission that invested modern American poetry with ancient Chinese insights and practices, and read across the range of twentieth-century American poets that exemplify the tradition that grew out of that transmission.

No knowledge of Chinese is necessary for this course.

Richard Howard

**The Richard Howard Hours**

6 classes (1.5 points) / I. Feb. 5-Mar. 12  Tue., 4:10pm-6:10pm

II. Mar. 26-Apr. 30

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

Nalini Jones

A Touch of Genius: Writing Back to the Canon

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 8 - Mar. 15 Fri., 12:05pm-2:05pm

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 reimagined 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*

Madhu Kaza

Kitchen Table Translation:

Cross-Language Experiments for Writers

6 classes (1.5 points) / Mar. 25 - Apr. 29 Mon., 3:30pm-5:30pm

Quiet as it’s kept, translation is always already with us. Regardless of our identification as multilingual, bilingual, monolingual, or something in between, as writers we access multiple languages whether it be through reading texts in translation, through navigation of the different languages of home, community, public and professional life, or through the different registers of multiple Englishes that surround us. Some writers actively work in literary translation and some experience translation all the time in the cultural difference of their names, bodies, accents, movements, and daily lives.

This class invites writers to read and write across languages to think through how we might channel translation through our own particular locations and dislocations in language to serve our stories, poems, essays, and our selves. We’ll pay particular attention to how immigrant, diasporic, indigenous, and p.o.c. writers have used translation and cross-language
experimentation to claim space for new kinds of stories and ideas, and to sharpen their sensitivities to language. We'll read translations and original writing by writers including Youmna Chlala, Teju Cole, Don Mee Choi, Dagmawi Woubshet, John Keene, Eiko Otake, Sawako Nakayasu and others. We will also examine the activist translation projects of organizations such as Antena, Jalada Africa, and the Transborder Immigrant Tool and collaborate on cross-language experiments of our own.

Note: Knowledge of a second language is not required for this class.

Nicole C. Kear

(Dis)ability in Memoir

4 classes (1 point) / Feb. 25 - Mar. 25       Mon., 10am-12pm

Since the time of Homer, characters with disabilities have populated the pages of fiction and poetry. What happens, though, when writers with disabilities take pen in hand—or in foot, in some cases—to tell their own stories?

In this class, we will ask the question: what is disability? What impact does disability have on visibility? We'll investigate the ways in which the true, personal stories of those with disabilities dismantle archetypes and give voice to the historically voiceless.

Dipping a toe in disability studies, we'll consider to what extent disability is a social construct and to what extent that changes the stories we tell. Through a diverse and eclectic set of readings, we'll investigate themes commonly found in disability memoirs, such as otherness, passing, and the body vs. the mind. We'll explore the ways in which the disability memoir converges with and diverges from the illness memoir, and think about crafting unique vernaculars that challenge the assumptions implicit in language.

We'll look at the unique, oftentimes radical modalities employed by authors with disabilities to tell their own story, and in doing so, will seek to answer the question of how to write, even in the most literal sense. Readings will include works by Helen Keller, Jean-Dominique Bauby, Virginia Woolf, William Styron, John Callahan, Cece Bell, and Andre Dubus.

Katy Lederer

Writing Climate Change

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 8 - Mar. 15       Fri., 12:30pm-2:30pm

Traditional approaches to creative writing have not been effective at addressing the epochal disaster that is climate change. Activists and academics have been calling for years for artists and writers to focus on the problem, but, largely because global warming is overwhelmingly systemic and abstract, creative responses have been tentative. Much of the best climate
writing to date has been speculative or fantastic, taking place far into the future, or, when set in the present, narrowly wistful or nostalgic in its tone. In this class we will first consider the reasons why it has proven so difficult to write creatively and imaginatively about climate change and then ask ourselves how we can better approach the issue in our creative work. Reading and discussion will range across genres, including works of poetry and fiction as well as philosophical essay and lyric and creative nonfiction. (We will not be discussing more expository or journalistic approaches.) We will pay particular attention to the aesthetic choices that creative writers who have written compellingly about climate change have made, imagining a creative practice in which climate change is approached not as a possibility, but as the reality we are all writing into. In addition to concentrated reading and discussion, students will work on a choice of four relatively brief writing assignments, including: a polemical philosophical essay; a personal essay that draws “evidence” from the writer’s daily life; a poem written using a pre-prepared page of climate-evocative lexicon; and a piece of short fiction that focuses on a character in a climate-related conflict.

Readings will include excerpts from both creative and critical texts, including:

- *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, by Naomi Oreskes and Eric Conway
- *Hyperobjects*, by Timothy Morton
- *The Great Derangement*, by Amitav Ghosh
- *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus
- *Alphabet*, by Ingmar Christiansen
- *What Nature*, Eds. of the Boston Review
- *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*, Juliana Spahr
- *Ecodeviance*, by CAConrad
- “Speech Sounds,” by Octavia Butler
- “An Account of my Hut,” by Christina Nichol
- *Gold, Fame, Citrus*, Claire Vaye Watkins
- *We’re Doomed, Now What?*, by Roy Scranton

Amy Grace Loyd

**The Editing Cycle**

6 classes (1.5 points) / Mar. 29 - May. 3  Fri., 2:10pm-4:10pm

“We edit to let the fire show through the smoke”—Arthur Plotnik

Editing and rewriting are an essential and unavoidable part of the writing process. This course will examine the various stages of editing involved in completing, submitting, and publishing your work. Special attention will be paid to the challenges of editing fiction and creative nonfiction in which understanding the author’s intentions for a given piece (that is, its particular voice and style, the way in which a work breaks or conforms to grammatical and craft-based rules, and with what consistency) is paramount as part of clarifying and communicating those intentions to a reader. Students will be asked to bring in a short piece or part of a longer piece to share and submit to editing. We’ll cover some basics
of editing and look at published pieces (excerpts and finished pieces) of fiction and creative nonfiction and how these were edited for a given publication’s audience and whether they succeeded and/or failed to gain or persuade a reader, to let the fire show through the smoke. We’ll also discuss the realities of collaborating with professionals editing for a range of venues/audiences and how these variables impact their expectations of your work from a work-in-progress to a publishable product.

Daphne Merkin

Language of Eros

6 classes (1.5 points) / Mar. 28 - May. 2 Thu., 5:15pm-7:15pm

The vicissitudes of the erotic life have always been difficult to catch hold of in writing, in part because the vocabulary of sexual experience is so curiously limited (“throbbing,” “wet,” “limp,” etc.), ensuring that we each stay stuck in the glue of our own experience. The corporeal solipsism of the activity may also have something to do with it but, whatever the reason, badly-written sex scenes are easier to locate than well-written ones, often sliding off into outright porn. A few writers come immediately to mind as having mastered this elusive territory—D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Pauline Reage and Marguerite Duras—but for the most part even gifted writers seem to stumble when it comes to the subject of sex. With the advent of #MeToo, the whole arena of sexual desire has become even more freighted but it seems to me that this development only makes the effort to write about eros that much more challenging—and necessary. I plan in this course to assign a reading list of primary and secondary material, including memoirs, novels, and both literary and psychoanalytic essays. We will discuss all three genres closely in the hope that it will help clarify how to approach this vexed but always intriguing subject.

Kristen Radtke

Graphic Narratives

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 25 - Mar. 25 Mon., 6:15pm-8:15pm

From comic strips to illustrated epics, graphic storytelling goes way beyond the funny pages. This class is rooted in the understanding that graphic literature is indeed literature, that comics journalism has a place next to traditional reportage, and that the best visual storytelling belongs in conversation with our greatest prose novels. We’ll learn how images and text come together to tell stories and investigate ideas, interrogating the relationship between prose and visual art. Students need not have drawing skills to take this course—we’ll investigate ways that typography impacts our stories and essays, how photographs change the way we read written work, and explore hybrid forms.
Saïd Sayrafiezadeh

Running for Your Life:

Memoir Writing in 1000 Words or Less

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 5 - Mar. 12       Tue., 7:20pm-9:20pm

Is it really possible to span, say, three decades of your life in three clear, straightforward prose pages without seeming like you’re racing top speed? The short answer is yes. But the longer answer requires this six-week master class that will teach techniques of compression, efficiency, tempo, content selection and even word choice. And since there’s really no time to waste when writing so succinctly, we’ll also examine what not to do with things like digression, dialogue, in media res and chronology. We’ll put all of this into practice by writing and workshopping our own 1000 word pieces, which will be inspired and informed by the personal essays of Roxane Gay, Prajwal Parajuly, Leslie Jamison, James Baldwin, A.M. Homes, among others. How have these artists said a lot about by essaying a little? And how have they managed to broaden their personal experience by incorporating elements like society, economy, geography? We’ll compare and contrast memoir writing with other genres, like fiction (Tao Lin), poetry (Marilyn Chin), film (Stanley Kubrick), and anything else that might be able to teach us what constitutes the art of telling a story about ourselves at breakneck speed.

Ira Silverberg

The Beats at Columbia

6 sessions (1.5 points) / Mar. 26 - Apr. 30       Tue., 6:30pm-8:30pm

The infamous troika—Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs—were affiliated with Columbia University and its environs.

Beginning with the early collaborative work of Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs, *And The Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks*, through the film *Kill Your Darlings* that brought the scene to the screen, this course explores their time here and the community and movement known as “The Beats.”

Using primary texts, film (in a variety of forms including features and television interviews), spoken word recordings, and Steven Watson’s *The Birth Of The Beat Generation*, The Beats at Columbia will look at the aesthetic and political influence of this prescient post-war group of writers.
Jia Tolentino

How to Sound Like Yourself

4 classes (1 point) / Apr. 11 - May 2
Thu., 6:40pm-8:40pm

As a writer, your voice is the instrument through which you convey all possible information. If your voice is a dull pencil or a spit-filled tuba, you’re cooked. (This will not be a seminar about a metaphor use.) In this class, we’ll look at voice in the personal essay, in criticism, in reporting, and in blurrier genres that are often effectively voice showcases, like the advice column and the first-person reported essay. (Maybe even the blog!) We’ll characterize the voices of the writers we’re studying—Patricia Lockwood, Ocean Vuong, Holly Brubach, Ellen Willis, Greg Tate, Joan Didion, George Saunders, Caity Weaver, Rebecca Solnit, Janet Malcolm, Choire Sicha, etc—and attempt to figure out how, and to what ends, these instruments have been sharpened and tuned. How does a voice inflect what it’s conveying? What unspoken points does it establish, test, and prove? For students, the more personal side of this exploration will start at a mechanical level, with exercises that are as much about editing as writing. “Finding your voice,” as the most tedious among us might say, can often feel like chipping a little figure out of stone or Play-Doh—and to be able to do this for yourself, you have to be able to (for example) pull a voice out of a raw interview transcript, or sketch the feel of a whole day in three vivid lines.

Maria Venegas

The Art Revision

6 classes (1.5 points) / Feb. 7 - Mar. 14
Thu., 5:15pm-7:15pm

You’ve done the initial work, you have the story on the page, now what? How do we get our writing to the next level? Most authors know that real writing begins with rewriting. How do we dig deeper and color in the edges to make our writing more evocative? How do we use the senses to make it come to life? What would happen if we approached the same material from the perspective of a different character? Or from an entirely different point of view (third person as opposed to first-person say)?

Revising is about making choices and learning to trust your instincts. In this master class, we will focus on your work and on sharpening your tools for revision. Class discussion will be augmented by weekly reading assignments.
W.H. Auden defined poetry as “memorable speech.” This course is not just for poets, but for anyone interested in exploring and testing the art of memorization and its relationship to storytelling, song, and literature. Once upon a time, before print, before the novel, all literature belonged to the oral tradition and was committed to memory. Before there were libraries (never mind the Internet), songs and stories depended on human memory and the human voice to be created, to be shared, and to be passed on. We will read poems from different times and in different forms, and passages from works of fiction and creative nonfiction as well, and see what happens when they’re committed to our own memories and spoken in our own voices.
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.