

UNDERGRADUATE CREATIVE WRITING

609 Kent • New York, NY • 10027

212-854-3774 / writingprogram@columbia.edu

<http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate>

SPRING 2022 COURSE DESCRIPTION

All students are eligible for seminars and beginning workshops, though space is limited.

If the class is full, add your name to the SSOL waitlist and attend the first day.

Students may take only one workshop per semester and two seminars per semester.

Intermediate, advanced & senior workshops require a writing sample. Please visit our 609 Kent office or our website at <http://arts.columbia.edu/writing/undergraduate> for information on Registration Procedures.

BEGINNING WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 1100 Beginning Fiction Workshop

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

Instructors

Sec 01 Melanie Broder

Sec 02 Patrick Ford-Matz

Sec 03 Laura Green

Sec 04 Kimberly Liu

WRIT UN 1200 Beginning Nonfiction Workshop

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

Instructors

Sec 01 Galina Nemirovsky

Sec 02 Laina Richards

WRIT UN 1300 Beginning Poetry Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Melissa Connelly

Sec 02 Elias Diakolios

INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 2100 Intermediate Fiction Workshop

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

Instructors

Sec 01 Frances Cha

Sec 02 James Yeh

WRIT UN 2200 Intermediate Nonfiction Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 John Vincler

WRIT UN 2300 Intermediate Poetry Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Alex Dimitrov

ADVANCED WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3100 Advanced Fiction Workshop

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

Instructors

Sec 01 Halle Butler

Sec 02 Sam Lipsyte

SENIOR WORKSHOPS

WRIT UN 3101 Senior Fiction Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Ben Marcus

WRIT UN 3201 Senior Nonfiction Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Mallika Rao

WRIT UN 3301 Senior Poetry Workshop

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

Instructor

Sec 01 Timothy Donnelly

SEMINARS

WRIT UN 3111 Exercises in Style

Raymond Queneau, in his book *Exercises in Style*, demonstrated that a single story, however unassuming, could be told at least ninety-nine different ways. Even though the content never changed, the mood always did: aggressive, mild, indifferent, lyrical, sensitive, technical, indirect, deceitful. This course for writers will look at a wide range of prose styles, from conspicuous to subtle ones. We will not only read examples of obviously stylistic prose, but consider as well how the reigning prose norms are themselves stylistic bulwarks, entrenched in the culture for various reasons that might interest us. We will read a variety of writers, from Ernest Hemingway to Renata Adler to Cormac McCarthy to Alice Munro, and more. Writing exercises, vigorous in-class discussion will be required.

Instructor

Joss Lake

WRIT UN 3113 Voices from the Edge

What does it mean to be marginalized? In this seminar we'll read work that challenges our received notions about "the edge" and who's on it. We'll read with an eye toward issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality but we'll also think about marginalization in terms of genre, geography, and even personal politics. Our goal won't be to categorize and quantify hardships, but to appreciate some great--though overlooked--writing. And, finally, to try and understand how these talented artists wrote well. During the semester students will write short fiction inspired by the work they read and the craft issues discussed in class.

Instructor

Amanda Lee Koe

WRIT UN 3128 How to Write Funny

In this humor-writing course, you will read, listen to, and watch comedic samples from well-known and lesser-known humorists. How could you not have fun in a class where we watch and critique the sketches of Monty Python, Nichols and May, Mr. Show, Mitchell & Webb, Key and Peele, French and Saunders, Derrick Comedy, Beyond the Fringe, Dave Chappelle, Bob and Ray, Mel Brooks, Amy Schumer, and SNL, to name just a few?

The crux of our time, though, will be devoted to writing. Students will be expected to complete weekly writing assignments; additionally, there will be in-class assignments geared to strategies for crafting *surprise* (the kind that results in a laugh as opposed to, say, a heart attack or divorce). Toward this end, we will study the use of irony, irreverence, hyperbole, misdirection, subtext, wordplay, formulas such as the rule of three and paraprosochians (look it up), and repetition, and repetition.

I promise that if you attend the class and complete the assignments your writing will become funnier. I cannot promise that you will become David Sedaris or Maria Semple because I believe such talent is inborn. In other words, I can't teach you to have an original voice, but I can encourage its development. I also promise you that you will have fun...or else.

Instructor

Patricia Marx

WRIT UN 3127 Time Moves Both Ways

What is time travel, really? We can use a machine or walk through a secret door. Take a pill or fall asleep and wake up in the future. But when we talk about magic machines and slipstreams and Rip Van Winkle, we are also talking about memory, chronology, and narrative. In this seminar, we will approach

time travel as a way of understanding "the Fourth Dimension" in fiction. Readings will range from the speculative to the strange, to the realism of timelines, flashbacks, and shifts in perspective. Coursework will include short, bi-weekly writing assignments, a completed short story, and a time- inflected adaptation.

Instructor
Hilary Leichter

WRIT UN 3216 Truth & 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 UN 3222 The Role Of The Critic

Criticism is an ancient art form: in the West, it dates all the way back to Aristotle and Plato. But *is* criticism an art form? What purpose(s) does it really serve? In this seminar, we will examine the critic's role in society, paying special attention to American critics from the 20th and 21st centuries. Reading closely, we will unpack arguments, examine the changing criteria writers have used in responding to cultural products, and address issues of voice, technique, and practice. We will also draft (and redraft) our own responses, in the form of a reviews and a critical essay. Throughout, our goal is to understand how others see, hear, and experience the world, so that we may better understand our own reactions and learn how to translate them effectively (i.e., with style and authority) to the page. Students will complete three critical pieces: A hundred-word capsule review (to be revised throughout the semester); a newspaper-length review (750 words); and a longer critical essay, which may be written in the first person.

Instructor
Sec 01 Alex Abramovich

WRIT UN 3223 Food Writing: The Taste Profile

"Some of the most significant stories today are about food. But you won't find them in the food section, where journalism has been supplanted by fantasy." — Molly O'Neill, *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2003

It's been over a decade and a half since the late Molly O'Neill made that proclamation about American food writing's state of affairs, and, in some key ways, her laments still ring true. Look at prominent food publications today and food writing may seem like a genre of limited possibilities, doing little more than fulfilling an immediate service for readers. A vividly-written recipe column can tell you what to cook for dinner; an evocative restaurant review can tell you where to *go* for dinner. Both of these aforementioned

schools of food writing take great skill, but there's far more to the genre than recipes and restaurant reviews. Some of the English language's most astute food writers have honored a basic truth: Food has unique narrative potential to tell us about where someone comes from, the cultures that shaped them, and who they are.

In this seminar, you will learn how to engage with food as a writer beyond mere sensory terms, instead using food as a tool of memory—a memory that lives inside us, the memory of others. When practiced with rigor and empathy, food writing can touch on matters that go far beyond the plate, providing broader insight into human behavior. You'll read and critique some of the most thought-provoking examples of the genre before taking a stab at different forms yourself, including the personal essay and the posthumous profile. Your capstone project will be a posthumous essay on a figure in the food world of your choosing—a food writer, a chef, a cooking teacher—that memorializes their legacy in a clear-eyed way, writing against the fantasy that O'Neill so astutely critiqued.

Instructor

Sec 01 Mayukh Sen

WRIT UN 3315 Poetic Meter And Form

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

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

Instructor

Joseph Fasano

WRIT UN 3320 Provocations In Twentieth Century Poetics

This is a class about poetry and revolt. In a century of wars, unchecked proliferation of industrial and market systems in the continued legacy of settler-colonialism and the consolidation of state powers, does language still conduct with revolutionary possibilities? In this class, we will read manifestos, philosophical treatises, political tracts, literary polemics, poems, scores, and so on, as we consider poetry's long-standing commitment to visionary practices that seek to liberate consciousness from the many and various structures of oppression. The term "poetry" is not limited to itself but becomes, in our readings, an open invitation to all adjacent experiments with and in the language arts. As such, we will look at the emergence of the international avant-gardes as well as a few student movements that populate and complicate the explorations of radical politics in the twentieth-century. In addition to our readings, students will be asked to produce creative responses for class discussion. Final projects will be provocations of their own design. Required Texts: Friedrich Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*, Aimé Césaire: *Notebook of A Return to the Native Land*, Hilda Hilst: *The Obscene Madame D*, Marguerite Duras: *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, Guy Debord: *Society of the Spectacle*.

Instructor

Lynn Xu

WRIT UN 3011 Translation Seminar: Intro to T & P

This course is designed to introduce students to the art of literary translation as a way of exploring and violently embracing their own identities as writers, language-shapers, and global citizens. Participants will work with the instructor to develop individual projects that will be revised and workshopped over the course of the term. Emphasis will be placed on methods of representing and producing linguistic and literary innovation in English. Weekly readings will familiarize students with a range of perspectives on translation and its relationship to writing. *No prior knowledge of foreign language required.*

Instructor

Katrine Øgaard Jensen

WRIT UN3015 Daily Life

In his poem “*A Few Days*,” James Schuyler reflects: “A few days / are all we have. So count them as they pass. They pass too quickly / out of breath.” Before we know it, as Schuyler says, “Today is tomorrow.” This course will encourage us to slow down time and document today while it is still today. One of the course’s main points is to pursue the ordinary, and to recognize that the ordinary – whether presented as poems, essays, stories, fragments, etc. – can become art. Assignments will provide broad examples of how to portray dailiness. Each week you will write a short piece (1-3 pages) that responds to these assignments while engaging your own daily life. The form is open. You could, for example, write a poem or story with a brief critical preface, or you could compose an essay that explores formal and/or thematic qualities. You can also create multimedia work. The important thing is to treat the materials we will read as springboards into your own artistic practice.

Instructor

Sec 01 Jon Cotner

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

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

This semester, as part of our course experience, a cohort of incarcerated students from Rikers Island will conduct the class readings and weekly writing assignments. To provide everyone with a more enriching learning experience, I will share the incarcerated students’ written responses to the reading and incorporate them into our class discussion. Please note that in return, our classes will be recorded and shared with the incarcerated students.

Instructor

Christopher Wolfe

WRIT UN 3018 Inhabiting Form: Writing The Body

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

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

Instructor

Samantha Zighelboim

WRIT UN 3024 Photographic Testimonies

The human desire to connect to the past is a forever phenomenon. Today, technological advancements have accelerated an unprecedented proliferation of the “past” through easily circulated and reproduced digital content—namely, through photographic images. These photographic testimonies of the past are often fragmented, distorted, and evoke a feeling of nostalgia—a Greek compound that combines *nostos* or “homecoming” with *álgos*, meaning “pain” or “ache.” Good or bad, the revival of nostalgia coincides with times of dramatic social and economic uncertainties, disruptions, and cultural shifts. With that in mind, this course will perform an urgent and critical re-reading and re-contextualizing of photographic narratives through the practice of writing. The course readings, discussions, and writing assignments will address questions such as: What role does photography play in shaping histories and identities? How are historical narratives skewed through photography? How is memory of an event challenged by the photography of the same? We will read texts from artists, writers, and art critics such as Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, Hito Steyerl, John Berger, Ariella Azoulay, Allan Sekula, Tina Campt, David Levi Strauss, and more.

Instructor

Sumeja Tulic